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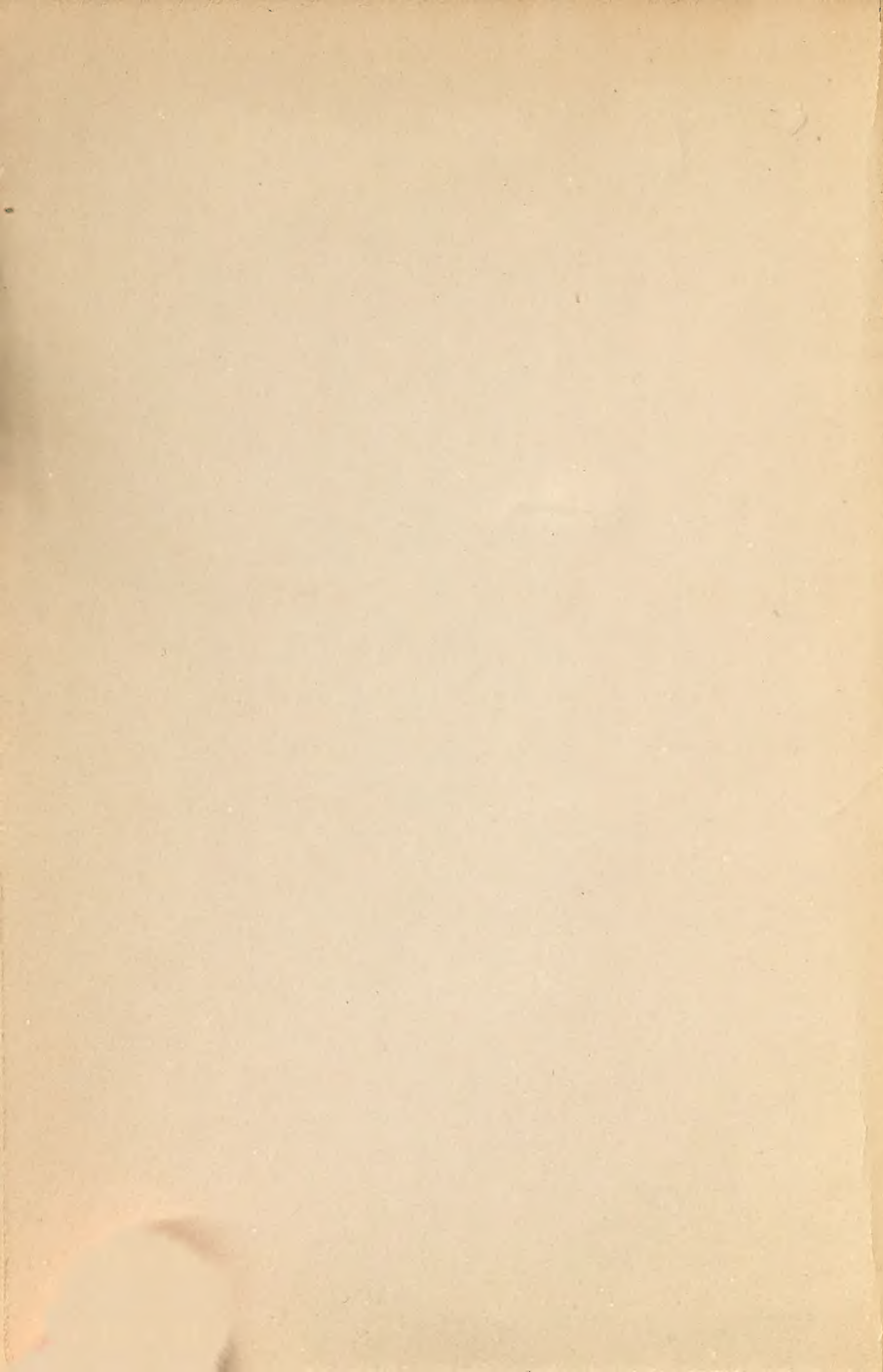
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THE ORESTEIA OF AESCHYLUS

Aeschylus.

THE ORESTEIA OF AESCHYLUS

AGAMEMNON, CHOEPHORI,
EUMENIDES

TRANSLATED BY
R. C. TREVELYAN

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TO
EMILY
AND
GORDON BOTTOMLEY

INTRODUCTION

THE seven surviving plays of Aeschylus (B.C. 525-456) are the earliest complete dramatic works that we possess. Yet already in them the art of poetic drama has been carried to the same kind of elaborate perfection and imaginative mastery that is found in the symphonies of Beethoven. The fragments of Aeschylus's predecessors are too scanty to give us any clear idea of the debt he may have owed to them. But it seems probable that drama, as one of the supreme forms of art, was the creation of his own unique personal genius. Within the limits of a short introduction no adequate account can be given of his art, or of its relations to the plays of his rivals and successors. I must confine myself to a few remarks upon the traditional dramatic forms which he inherited and developed, and upon my own methods of translation.

The lost plays of the earlier Athenian dramatists must have been in the main lyrical. Between long stretches of choric singing and dancing, there would be interludes of dialogue, spoken in trochaic or iambic verse by a single actor and the leader of the chorus. Aeschylus is said to have introduced a second actor; yet two-thirds of the *Suppliants*, his first surviving play, were sung by the chorus; and even in the three plays here translated, which were written in his old age, the choruses are still of far greater length and dramatic importance than in any work of Sophocles or Euripides. In the *Eumenides*, indeed, the chorus is the true protagonist of the drama; while in the

Agamemnon and the Choephoroi they are more than a mere poetic commentary and background to the action. They are the chief interpreters of the poet's imaginative and religious ideas. Through them tragic events are foreshadowed, and they give full expression to the emotions of pity and terror aroused by tragedy when it comes. Their general imaginative significance is usually clear enough; but in detail they must often have been obscure even to a contemporary audience. Time has deepened this obscurity for us, who are unfamiliar with the ethical and religious ideas that underlie them, with the myths to which they allude, and with their highly artificial language and metrical forms. Yet, if we make the effort, we shall find in them poetry of a greatness that has never been surpassed.

My object in this translation has been to reproduce as faithfully as I can, for those who cannot read Greek, not only the meaning, but the form, phrasing and movement of the original. In the dialogue the problem is a relatively simple one. A normal English blank verse, though shorter by two syllables than a Greek iambic line, and of a different rhythmical structure, is yet not dissimilar in movement and general effect. Moreover, as English words tend to be shorter than Greek words, a close translation of an iambic line will prove, on an average, to be of about the same length as a blank verse. It ought then to be possible, without either omissions or padding, to translate the iambic dialogue into blank verse line for line. Literalness must sometimes be sacrificed, nor can crabbed rhythms and awkward phrasing be always avoided. Yet on the whole this method seems to me to convey the general effect more truly than one which is ready to disregard the relation of the Greek phrasing to the individual line.

In the lyrics and anapaests the difficulties are far greater, and no solution can be altogether satisfactory. I have tried to imitate as closely as possible the metrical pattern and phrasing, in such a way that one musical

setting would fit both the Greek and the English words. In order to do this, various compromises are necessary.

All Greek poetry was quantitative; that is to say, the metrical design was determined by the length or shortness of the syllables, and not by stress or pitch. Now the structure of English verse depends in the main upon stress. The part played by quantity or length is no doubt of great importance, but we are not generally conscious of it. If then we are to reproduce the pattern of a Greek rhythmical phrase in English, we must as it were translate quantity into stress; that is to say, English syllables of sufficient stress must be made to correspond with those Greek syllables (usually, though not always long) upon which the metrical beat falls. It is also necessary, so far as possible, to make English short syllables correspond with Greek short syllables, otherwise the structure of the verse might be obscured, and the movement become heavy and lumbering, as is the case with German hexameters. Owing however to the fact that there are fewer short or light syllables in English than in Greek, unsatisfactory compromises must often be made. I have moreover found it necessary to insert unemphatic short syllables to which there is no equivalent in the Greek. Sometimes again, when there might be some ambiguity as to the rhythm, I have taken the liberty of marking the metrical beat by accents placed over the syllables that should be made prominent.

The following passage from the Agamemnon (420-426) will illustrate the method I have used. Every bar should begin with a metrical beat; and the signs - and ∪ indicate the length and shortness of the Greek syllables. A long Greek syllable should be considered as twice the length of a short one, except where a long syllable occupies a whole bar, when it is equivalent to three shorts.

Ö-	neIrö-	phān-	toi dē	peī-	thēmōn-ēs
A-	non there	come	dream-re-	vealed	semblan-ces,

păr-| eîsî | dōx-| aī phēr-| oū-
be-guiling | shapes. | Brief the | joy,

săi | chăr-| in mă-| taīān.
vain | the | sweet de-lusion.

Mă-| tăn găr, | ĕut ān | ĕsthlă | tīs dōk-| ōn hōr-| ān,
For | vainly, | when he | seems to | view the | phantom | bliss,

păr-| āll-| āx-| āsă | dīă chēr-| ōn
be-tween his | arms, | lo ! the | vision is | flown

bě-| bākēn | ōpsīs | oū mēth-| ūstēr-| ōn
and | vanish-es a-way with-out re-call

ptēr-| oīs ōp-| ād-| oīs hūp-| nou kē-| leūthoīs.
on | shadowy | wings | down the | paths of | slumber.

It will be seen that in the fifth line I have inserted the extra light syllable "his"; and in the last line "on shadowy wings" does not exactly correspond with "pterois opad."

For technical reasons, which it would take too much space to explain, I have found it impossible to translate the anapaestic passages in such a way that the English metre should always correspond exactly with the Greek. However a stage performance of portions of this translation by Cambridge undergraduates, in which two actors, representing the chorus, each took turns at speaking the anapaests, has convinced me that by intelligent recitation such lines can be made to sound well as an English metre.

It is not for me to say how far I have succeeded in translating these elaborate poetic forms into verse which can be read without difficulty by those who have no knowledge of the original. Greek lyrical poetry was intended to be sung, not to be spoken or read. The general design of a complex strophe, and the rhythmical phrases which composed it, were no doubt made easily comprehensible to the vocal setting, and by the accompaniment of dancing movements. Under those conditions, a more elaborately organised structure, and more daring changes of rhythm within the same strophe were possible than we are accus-

tomed to in our simpler lyrical forms, where the structure is generally delineated and emphasised by rhyme, rather than by complicated variations and changes of internal rhythm. Even where rhyme is dispensed with, as in the choruses of *Samson Agonistes*, the rhythm is far more uniform than in even the simplest Greek lyrical poems. For these reasons, an unaccustomed reader may well find it hard to accept, as natural and effective English verse, such adaptations of alien metrical forms. Yet I hope that the difficulty may not in all cases prove insurmountable. My own personal belief is that English poets might learn much by the study of Greek lyrical structure, and might so discover new and unexpected rhythmical possibilities in our language, that would prove of real practical value as a means of enlarging the range of poetic expression. However that may be, I shall feel that the success or failure of this experiment will depend upon the degree to which a reader who knows no Greek can feel that he is reading, a translation no doubt, but a translation into intelligible English metre and poetry.

The text of these plays has been so mangled and corrupted by ignorant copyists, that in many passages there can be no hope of certainty as to the true reading. The conjectural restorations of scholars are in general as divergent and unconvincing as are their interpretations of the numerous obscurities of language and sense. I have been compelled to form for myself the eclectic text which is here translated, but which the limited scale of this book makes it impossible to print opposite to the English, as I could have wished. However it is perhaps fortunate for me that my deficiencies of scholarship should be thus, in some degree, screened from expert criticism. I have ventured upon no emendations or interpretations of my own, but in each case have chosen what has seemed to me the most plausible among various conflicting views. But although I have thus made my translation as scholarly as I was able, it is primarily intended not for scholars or students,

but for those who cannot read Greek, and yet care for great poetry.

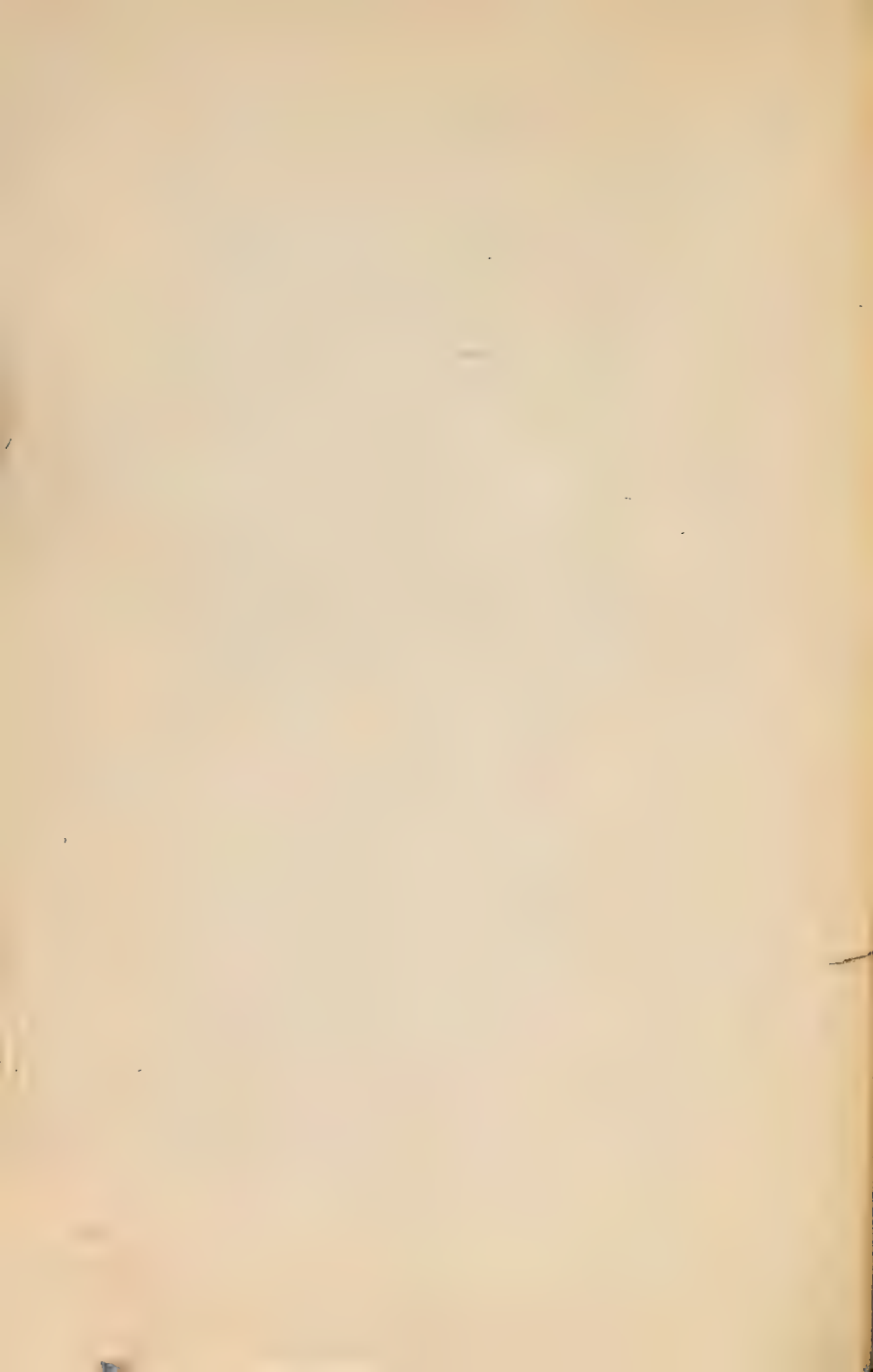
I wish here to acknowledge the great debt I owe to Mr. Austin Smyth for his kindness in allowing me to use his unpublished notes on the *Agamemnon* and the *Choephoroi*. I have adopted a considerable number of his emendations and interpretations. In particular I have accepted the whole of his bold reconstructions of *Choephoroi*, lines 783-837 and 952-971, where the text has been given up by most scholars as corrupt beyond hope of emendation. In such cases no restoration can be altogether convincing; but at least Mr. Smyth has provided me with both sense and metre to translate, which no other text does. I much regret that the scheme of the book does not allow me to print his emendations, and his ingeniously persuasive account of how he has arrived at them.

The lines are numbered throughout in exact accordance with A. Sidgwick's edition of *Aeschylus* in the *Oxford Classical Texts* (Clarendon Press).

THE STORY

Atreus, the son of Pelops and King of Argos, banished his brother Thyestes, who had seduced his wife and plotted against his throne. Afterwards Atreus, pretending to be reconciled with his brother, invited him to a feast at Argos, and set before him the minced flesh of his two murdered children. Thyestes ate; but soon discovering the deception, cursed the whole house of Atreus, and fled back to exile. Agamemnon, the son of Atreus, succeeded his father as King of Argos. During Agamemnon's absence on the ten years' siege of Troy, Aigisthos, a surviving son of Thyestes, seduced his wife Klytaemnestra, who had come to hate her husband on account of his cruel sacrifice of their daughter Iphigeneia at Aulis. When Agamemnon returned from Troy she murdered him and his concubine, Cassandra,

with her own hands, and proclaimed Aigisthos as her husband and King of Argos. Eight years later Orestes, the son of Agamemnon and Klytaemnestra, gaining entrance into the palace in the disguise of a merchant, slew his mother and the usurping Aigisthos. To this deed he had been impelled by the commands and threats of Apollo, the god of Delphi, at whose shrine he afterwards received ceremonial purification for blood-guiltiness. But the Erīnues, the avengers of kindred-murder, did not cease to hunt Orestes from land to land, until after long wanderings he came to Athens, and there sought protection at the sanctuary of Athena, who thereupon constituted the court of Areopagus, that his case might be tried by a jury of her citizens. The votes for acquittal and condemnation being equal, the goddess, rejecting the legal subtleties of the accusing Furies, gave her casting vote as president for the acquittal of Orestes, and at length, with much difficulty, conciliated the aggrieved Erīnues, persuading them to accept an abode in a cavern beneath the Acropolis, where they were thenceforth worshipped, under the changed name of the Eumenides, or Kindly Goddesses, as the friends and protectors of the Athenian people.



THE AGAMEMNON

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

AGAMEMNON, *King of Argos, son of Atreus.*

KLYTAEMNESTRA, *his wife.*

AIGISTHOS, *his cousin and enemy, paramour of Klytaemnestra.*

KASSANDRA, *daughter of Priam, King of Troy.*

A WATCHMAN.

A HERALD.

CHORUS OF TWELVE ARGIVE ELDERS.

THE AGAMEMNON

*Before the royal palace at Argos. On the roof a WATCH-
MAN is seen outlined against a night sky.*

WATCHMAN

The Gods have I besought for my release
This whole long year of vigil, wherein couched
On the Atreidae's roof on bent arms, dogwise,
I have learnt the nightly sessions of the stars,
Those chiefly that bring storm and heat to men,
The bright conspicuous dynasts of the sky,
And noted well their settings and their risings.
Still am I watching for the signal flame,
A beam of fire carrying news from Troy
And tidings of its capture : so dictates 10
A woman's sanguine heart to a man's will joined.
Now when upon my restless dew-damp couch
I have laid me down, this bed of mine where dreams
Haunt not—for fear instead of sleep stands by,
Alert lest sleep securely seal my lids—
Oft as I have a mind to sing or hum,
A tune in slumber's stead by way of salve,
Then do I weep the fortunes of this house
No more so wisely managed as of old.
But now blessed release from toil be mine, 20
And the fire's happy tidings shine through gloom.

His attention is drawn to something in the distance.

Oh hail, thou lamp of night, that dawnest clear
As daybreak, heralding in Argos many

A choral dance for joy at this good hap !

Ioû ! Ioû !

Agamemnon's queen thus loudly do I summon

To arise from her couch and lift within

The house forthwith a shout of holy joy

To greet yon light, if verily Ilion's town

Be captured, as the announcing beacon boasts.

30

The dancing who should prelude if not I ?

For mine too will I deem my lord's good luck,

Since sixes three this watch has thrown for me.

Well, soon may it be given me to clasp

Our returned master's friendly hand in mine.

For the rest I keep silence : on my tongue

A great ox treads : though, had it speech, this house

Might tell a plain tale. I, for folk who know,

Speak gladly : for know-nothings I forget.

*Exit WATCHMAN. KLYTAE MNESTRA's cry of triumph
is heard within. Enter CHORUS OF ELDERS.
During the following chorus the dawn gradually
breaks.*

CHORUS

'Tis the tenth year now since Priam's mighty

40

Avenging foe,

Menelaos, and king Agamemnon too,

Twain children of Atreus dowered by Zeus

With stablished glory of sceptre and throne,

From the shores of Greece launched forth with a thousand

Argive crews

United in armed federation.

Loud rang their wrathful warcry forth,

As the scream of vultures robbed of their young,

When in mountain solitudes over their eyrie

50

They wheel and circle

With endless beating of oarlike wings,

Reft of the nestlings

Their watchful labour had tended.

But above there is one, be it Apollo,
 Or Pan, or Zeus, who hearing the shrill
 Sad cry of those birds, his suppliant wards,
 Shall one day send
 Retribution upon the offenders.
 Thus Atreus' children against Alexander ¹ 60
 A mightier Zeus, God of guest-right, sendeth,
 That so, for a bride's sake wooed by many men,
 Wrestlings as many and stubborn (when the knee
 Is pressed down into the dust, and the spear
 Is shivered and snapped as a prelude fit,)
 Might fall to the portion of Danaan ²
 And Trojan alike. Unsolved the event
 Still waiteth : and yet to an issue is moving.
 Neither by offerings burnt nor spilled,
 Nor yet by fireless oblation of wealth 70
 Shall the obdurate wrath be placated.

But we, with thews already outworn,
 Left useless at home when the host set forth,
 Linger supporting
 Upon staves our strength that is weak as a child's.
 For just as the youthful sap that swells
 Warm in a boy's breast,
 Is as feeble as eld and for war unfit,
 So the age-worn man, now that his green leaf
 Grows withered and sere, upon three slow feet 80
 Creeps, with no whit more than a child's strength,
 As he wanders a dream in the daylight.

But thou, O daughter
 Of Tyndareus, Klytaemnestra, Queen,
 What hath chanced ? What tidings have reached thine ears,
 That at every shrine
 Thou commandest ritual oblations ?
 And of all those Gods that frequent our town,
 From on high, from beneath,
 Whether heavenly sublime, or of earthlier power, 90

¹ Paris.

² Greek.

Glowing with gifts are the altars,
 And on all sides one by one bright flames
 Skyward are leaping,
 Medicined and nursed by the innocent spell
 And soft persuasion of hallowed gums,
 Rich unguent stored for a king's use.
 Hereof what can and may be revealed
 Deign thou to declare,
 And so be the healer of this my doubt,
 Which now to an evil boding sinks, 100
 But anon from the sacrifice Hope grown kind
 Drives back from the soul those ravening thoughts,
 That grief that gnaws at the heart-roots.

Strophe 1

Still have I virtue to sing the auspicious sailing of heroes
 Hardy in battle, (for still I inbreathe the enchantment
 Which is the strength of song, Heaven's gift to the agèd,)
 Telling how the twin-throned
 Single-hearted chiefs of the youthful
 Warriors of Hellas 110
 Launched forth vengefully prompted and armed
 For the Teucrian ¹ land by a glorious omen,
 When the black king of the birds to the kings of the ships
 was revealed, and beside him the white-tailed,
 By the royal tents swooping to earth on the side of the
 spear-arm,
 In conspicuous quarters,
 Rending the flesh of a hare and the young in the womb
 of the mother,
 That ne'er shall race and gambol more. 120
 Wailfully, wailfully chant we ; but máy good triumph !

Antistrophe 1

Then the wise seer,² regarding the valiant children of Atreus,
 How they in temper were twain, in the chiefs of the host knew

¹ Trojan.

² Kalchas.

Those hare-feasters : spake then, reading the omen :
 " In time this armed fleet
 Shall capture the fortress of Priam.
 Under the ramparts
 Herd by herd shall the wealth of the townsfolk
 Dwindle a spoil foredoomed to the reivers. 130
 Only let not the lowering wrath of a God foreshadow the
 embattled avengers,
 Troy's mighty curb ; for grieving in ruth holy Artemis
 hateth
 Those winged hounds of her father,
 Thus immolating the brood yet unborn in the cowering
 creature.
 Such feast of eagles she abhors.
 Wailfully, wailfully chant we ; but may good triumph !

Epode

Though thou, O Queen,¹ tenderly guardest over the young
 brood, 141
 Like dewdrops frail, even of ravening lions,
 Yea and all suckling whelps of the beasts that roam through
 the wild wood,
 Yet to these signs grant joyful achievement.
 For help I cry unto the healer Paian,²
 Lest she should hinder the Danaan fleet from its voyage,
 arousing
 Stubborn adverse winds, 150
 Urging a new sacrifice,³ an unwonted, an impious offering,
 Seed of strife, and revolt from awe
 Due to the husband. For haunting the home there abides
 a remorseless
 Wrath that forgets not, a guileful vengeance schemed for
 a child slain."
 Such was the chant of Kalchas announcing a prosperous
 omen

¹ Artemis.

² Apollo.

³ The sacrifice of Iphigenia.

Lay the host weatherbound with dwindling store,
By the straits of Chalkis, where the shifting
Tides of Aulis suck the shore ; 190

And when the while gales from Strymon,¹ bearing Str. 4
Ill anchorage, idleness, starvation
To aimless men, and evermore wasting ships and tackle,
The slow time to half its length prolonging,
Had crushed down the flower of Greece, withering it away ;
And when another cure,²
Heavier to the princes 200
Even than the cruel tempest,
Broke from the seer, urging the wrath
Of Artemis, yea, thén on the ground
Smiting their staves, thén the two kings
Wept, and unchecked the tears flowed :

And, finding voice, spake the elder king thus : Ant. 4
" A grievous doom it were should I obey not,
And grievous should I slay my child, my proud home's
adornment,
With a maid's life, spilt before the altar,
In red streams polluting so her own father's hands. 210
Whate'er I choose, 'tis woe.
How can I fail my fleet now,
Faithless to our alliance ?
Since with a fierce longing to crave
Such sacrifice, staying the winds
With blood of a maid, thát were no sin
Surely. Oh might it end well ! "

Str. 5
But once he had donned the harness of compulsion,
With veering mood impiously blowing
A gale unholy, unblest, he straight 220
Resigned his heart to utmost reckless outrage.
For men by wild, base-suggesting frenzy

¹ North winds.

² The sacrifice of Iphigeneia.

Infatuated, are soon steeled to ill deeds.
So he found heart to slay his own
Innocent child to aid a war
Waged for a stolen wife's sake,
A ritual to bless a fleet's voyage.

Ant. 5

Her prayers, appeals, pleading cries of "Father,"
Her girlish years, all were disregarded
By judges smitten with lust of war. 230
Then having prayed, the father bade the attendants,
As it were a kid, high above the altar
To lift her, ás with her robes wrapped around her
She bowed down in agony,
Bade them restrain her lovely lips,
Sealing them up, (that no curse
Thence on his house should issue,)

By a cruel gag's silencing violence. Str. 6
But shedding down to earth a saffron-stained robe,
She smote her slayers each in turn 240
Wounding them with piteous pleading eye-glance.
A painted form, as of one who fain would speak,
She seemed : for oft, where within
Her father's hall men were nobly feasting,
She sang with pure virgin voice,
Lovingly gracing so
The festal hour o'er the third libation
Poured by her loving father.

The rest my eyes saw not, neither do I tell. Ant. 6
But Kalchas' art never lacks fulfilment.
As even-scaled Justice wills, 250
Those who suffer learn the truth. The future—
Though, ere it come, men may know it—let it be :
'Twere but to weep ere 'tis need.
'Twill be revealed clearly when the dawn breaks.
But now betide fair success,

Even as the moment needs,
And as desires yonder sole protecting
Shield of the land of Apia ¹

Enter KLYTAEMNESTRA.

LEADER

I am come, Klytaemnestra, reverencing
Thy will ; for it is just that we should honour
The sovereign's wife, when the throne lacks its lord.
Now whether certified, or but in hope 261
Of happy news, thou makest sacrifice,
Fain would I know ; yet shall not grudge thee silence.

KLYTAEMNESTRA

With happy tidings, so the proverb runs,
May the dawn issue from her mother night.
But hear now joy greater than any hope :
For the Argives have captured Priam's town.

LEADER

How sayest thou ? I scarce heard through unbelief.

KLYTAEMNESTRA

The Achaians now hold Troy. Do I speak plain ?

LEADER

Joy overwhelms me, calling forth a tear. 270

KLYTAEMNESTRA

Thine eye convicts thee of a loyal joy.

LEADER

But where's thy warrant ? Hast thou proof of this ?

KLYTAEMNESTRA

I have. Why not ? Unless a God deceives me.

LEADER

Dost thou respect a dream's delusive phantoms ?

¹ Klytaemnestra. Apia is the Peloponnese.

KLYTAEMNESTRA

A drowsing mind's fancy I should not heed.

LEADER

Hath some vague unwinged rumour cheered thy soul ?

KLYTAEMNESTRA

My wits thou wouldst disparage like a girl's.

LEADER

How long then is it since the town was sacked ?

KLYTAEMNESTRA

This very night that gives birth to yon dawn.

LEADER

And what messenger could arrive so speedily ? 280

KLYTAEMNESTRA

Hephaistos,¹ from Ida flinging the bright glare.
Then beacon hitherward with posting flame
Sped beacon ; Ida first to Hermes' rock
On Lemnos ; from whose isle Athos, the peak
Of Zeus, was third to accept the mighty brand ;
And lifted high to bridge the wide backed sea,
The pinewood, heaped to please the travelling torch,
Sustained the blaze gold-gleaming like a sun,
Passing it onward to Mākistos' height.

He, tarrying naught, nor heedlessly by sleep 290

Subdued, neglected not his task as messenger ;
But o'er Eurīpos' streams arrived from far
His beacon's glow signalled Messapios' watch,
Who with an answering light passed on the sign,
Kindling a great stack of old withered heath.
Thence vigorously the light as yet undimmed
Leaping across Asopos' plain, most like
A bright full moon, on to Kithairon's crag,
Roused there a fresh relay of courier fire.
Nor did the watch deny the far-spiced glow,

300

¹ The Fire-god.

But raised into the skies a herald flame.
Then over lake Gorgopis the beam shot,
And having reached mount Aigioplanktos, there
Urged swift performance of the fiery rite.
Kindling they launch with generous energy
A mighty beard of flame which could o'erpass
The cliff that frowns o'er the Saronic gulf
Far flaring: then it alighted, then it reached
Arachne's sentinel peak, our city's neighbour.
And last here on the Atreidae's roof comes home 310
This light, true-fathered heir of Ida's fire.
These are the stages of my torch-racers,
Thus in succession each from each fulfilled.
But he's the winner who ran from first to last.¹
Such is the proof and token that I give thee,
This message sped to me by my lord from Troy.

LEADER

Lady, the Gods hereafter would I praise.
But first would I fain satisfy my wonder
Hearing thy tale from point to point retold.

KLYTAEMNESTRA

This day do the Achaians possess Troy. 320
'Tis loud, I ween, with cries that blend not well.
Pour vinegar and oil in the same cruse,
And you would say they sundered without love.
Even so the cries of conquerors and captives
Sound distinct as their differing fortunes are.
These falling around the bodies of their husbands
And brothers slain, children it may be clasping
Gray-headed sires, from throats no longer free
Bewail the fate of those whom most they loved;
While these a weary night of roving sends 330
Hungry from battle to whatever fare
The town affords, not marshalled orderly,
Rather, as each has snatched his lot of luck,

¹ Hephaistos, the god who personifies fire.

Within the captured palaces of Troy
 They are housing now, delivered from the frosts
 And dews of the bare sky ; and blessedly
 Without watch will they sleep the whole night long.
 Now if they show due reverence to the Gods
 That guard the conquered land, and spare their shrines,
 Then may the spoilers not in turn be spoiled. 340
 But let no ill-timed lust assail the host
 Mastered by greed to plunder what they ought not.
 For they have need to win safe passage home
 Back o'er the last lap of their double course.
 And if the returning host escape Heaven's wrath,
 Yet some day might the vengeance of the dead
 Prove wakeful, though no sudden ill befall.
 To such fears I, a woman, must give voice.
 Yet may good triumph manifestly past doubt ;
 Of many blessings now would I taste this fruit. 350

LEADER

Lady, sober like a wise man's is thy speech.
 Now, having heard proof so trustworthy from thee,
 I will address myself to thank the Gods.
 Their grace is recompense for all our toils.

Exit KLYTAEEMNESTRA.

CHORUS

O sovereign Zeus ! O gracious Night,
 Who hast won so measureless a glory !
 Who over the towers of Troy didst cast
 Such a close-drawn net, that none of the great,
 Nor yet of the young should escape the immense
 Ensnaring mesh 360
 Of thralldom and doom universal.
 Zeus, God of guest-right, great I confess him,
 Who hath wrought this vengeance ; against Alexander ¹
 His bow did he hold long bent, that neither

¹ Paris.

Short of the mark his bolt should alight,
Nor beyond the stars speed idly.

Str. 1

From Zeús cáme the stroke that felled them : yea that
Is sure truth : clearly may we trace it.
As he determined, so they fared. The fool said,
“ The Gods above heed not when the loveliness 370
Of sanctity is trampled down
By mortals.” Oh blasphemy !
’Tis plain nów and manifest
The wage paid for reckless sin,
The doom due to insolent presumption,
Whene’er in kings’ houses wealth superfluous
Beyond the mean teemeth. Yea, let there be
What contents without want
Soberly minded wisdom. 380
No strong fortress against fate
Hath that man who in wealth’s pride
Spurns from sight as a thing of naught
The mighty altar of Justice.

Ant. 1

Yet stróng is that obstinate Temptation,
The dire child of fore-designing Ate.
Then all in vain is remedy : unhidden
The mischief glows : baleful is the gleam thereof.
Like metal base, touched and rubbed 390
By a testing stone, even so
In him too trial reveals
A black stain. Like a child
A winged bird vainly he pursueth.
A dire taint lays he on all his people.
To prayers the Gods’ ears are deaf. Whosoe’er
Even consorts with such men,
Shares in their guilt and ruin.

¹ Infatuation that leads to sin and ruin.

Even so Paris, a house-guest
Honoured by the Atreidae,
Did foul wrong to his host's board
By his theft of a woman.

400

Bequeathing to her countrymen noise of shields Str. 2
Together clashed, thronging spears, stir of vessels arming,
And bearing death instead of dower to Ilion,
With light stép through the gates she is flown
On reckless venture. Sore the wailing then
Throughout the halls, doleful voices crying :
" Ah home of woe ! Home and woeful princes, wail ! 410
Ah woeful bed, printed yet with love's embrace !
Behold the spouse ! Bowed with shame, there he sits apart
In silent unreviling grief.
For her beyond seas he yearns :
Pined with dreams sits he, a sceptred phantom.
Hateful now to his mood seems
The grace of loveliest statues.
Lost the light of her eyes, and lost
Now that love they enkindled. 419

Anon there come dream-revealed semblances, Ant. 2
Beguiling shapes. Brief the joy, vain the sweet delusion.
For vainly, when he seems to view the phantom bliss,
Between his arms, lo ! the vision is flown
And vanishes away beyond recall
On shadowy wings down the paths of slumber."
Beside the hearth, within the royal palace, such
The grief that haunts, yea and woes transcending these.
But for the host, all who once launched from Hellas' shore,
Some woman now with suffering heart 430
In every house mourning sits.
Wounds enough pierce them to the soul's core.
Whom they sent to the war, them
They know : but now in the man's stead

Naught comes back to the home of each
Save an urn and some ashes.

Str. 3

The merchant Ares—dead men's bodies are his gold—

He whose scales weigh the poisoning fate of war,

From pyres beneath Ilion,

440

To those that loved them sendeth home

Heavy sore-lamented dust,

Stowing ash that once was man

Into the compass of a jar.

Then mourning each they tell his praise,

How one in craft of war was skilled,

How that one nobly shed his blood,—

“All for a woman, wife to another,”

So an angry whisper snarls forth ;

And against the sons of Atreus

450

An accusing grief spreads.

Others under the wall, slain

In their beauty, possess graves

There 'neath Ilian earth, that now

Hides in hate her possessors.

A people's talk, charged with wrath, is perilous.

Ant. 3

Oft 'tis proved potent as a public curse.

My boding heart waits to hear

Some news that night shroudeth still.

460

For on men of blood the Gods'

Eyes are fixed ; and late or soon

Will the dark Erinues¹ doom

The man who thrives unrighteously

To waste and dwindle luckless down,

Until his light be quenched : and once

Lost in the darkness, who shall help him ?

In excess of glory is peril :

For on mortals overweening

Are the bolts of Zeus sped.

470

¹ Furies.

Mine be fortune unenvied.
No walled towns would I² conquer,
Nor yet live to behold my age
Slave to alien masters.

ELDER 1

The fire hath brought tidings glad ;
And through the town swift report
Speeds : but hath it spoken true ?
Who knoweth ? 'Tis some miracle, or else 'tis false.

ELDER 2

Oh who could be so childish or so crazed of wit,
As from a flame's messaging
At once to catch fire at heart, and hazard so
Worse despair at altered news ?

480

ELDER 3

'Tis like a woman's sanguine mood
To indulge belief, ere the fact be surely known.

ELDER 4

Feminine imaginings are plausible, and o'er the mind
Quickly domineer : but as quick to die
Is rumour oft, when 'tis voiced by woman's tongue.

LEADER

Soon shall we know of all these torch-bearings,
Watches and sequences of beacon fire,
If they be true, or as in flattering dreams
This glad light came but to beguile our sense.
Lo yonder from the shore a herald crowned
With sprays of olive : and the thirsty dust,
Sister and neighbour to the mire, assures me,
That not with voiceless signs, nor kindling flame
Of mountain timber, in smoke will he discourse,
But either in plain speech will bid rejoice—
Nay, the opposite I will not contemplate.
May glad assurance by glad truth be crowned.

490

500

Whoso against the state perverts this prayer,
Himself let him reap the fruit of his own folly.

Enter a HERALD.

HERALD

O land of Argos, thou my native soil,
To thee this tenth-born year do I return,
Of many broken hopes still grasping one.
Ne'er could I dream here in this Argive earth
Dying to share that burial I so longed for.
Now hail, my country, hail, light of the sun,
And Zeus, the land's high lord, and Pytho's king.¹
At us his shafts never more shall he shoot : 510
Enough beside Skamander² his wrath smote us.
Now once more be our Saviour and our Healer,
O king Apollo. And these assembled Gods
All I invoke ; him too, my patron Hermes,
Herald beloved whom heralds reverence ;
And the heroes who sent forth the host—now kindly
May they receive back what the sword hath spared.
O palace of our kings, beloved abode,
Ye solemn seats, and ye, dawn-fronting Deities,
If e'er of old, with radiant eyes this day 520
Welcome with pomp our king so long time gone.
For to you and to all these alike returns
Prince Agamemnon, bringing light in gloom.
Come, ye must greet him joyfully, as beseems,
Who with the mattock of Avenging Zeus
Hath digged down Troy and ploughed her soil to dust.
Her altars and her temples are erased,
And the land's increase utterly destroyed.
Having laid on Troy so fell a yoke, the elder
Of Atreus' children, fortunate among princes, 530
Returns, of all men living worthiest praise.
For neither Paris nor his accomplice city

¹ Apollo.

² A river of Troy.

Can boast their crime exceeds its punishment.
Cast in a suit of theft and rapine too,
He hath lost the forfeit, and in one great ruin
Hath razed his father's house and the whole land.
Thus twofold cost the sons of Priam have paid.

LEADER

Joy to thee, herald of the Achaian host !

HERALD

Joy is mine. If the Gods will, let death come now.

LEADER

Hath longing for thy fatherland so tortured thee ? 540

HERALD

So that for joy mine eyes weep tears upon it.

LEADER

Sweet then was the disease with which you languished.

HERALD

How so ? Not yet do I understand your words.

LEADER

Not unreturned was this thy yearning love.

HERALD

Our country pined then for its pining host ?

LEADER

Full oft with desolate heart we sighed for you.

HERALD

Whence came this gloom, clouding the host's return ?

LEADER

Silence I have long used, as harm's best cure.

HERALD

How so ? The kings being gone, didst thou fear someone ?

LEADER

As thou didst say but now, it were joy to die. 550

HERALD

Because the event is well : though in all those years
Much may we reckon prosperously sped,
And much deplorably. Who save a God
May abide scathless everlastingly ?
Were I to cite our hardships and ill-lodgings,
Comfortless berths on narrow decks—and what
Did we not lack by day, poor groaning wretches ?
And then on land—there it was worse distress,
Bivouacked close beneath the enemy's walls.
Down from the sky, and from the fenny ground 560
Rained drizzling dews, a never-ceasing plague,
Making our hairy garments full of vermin.
Or should I tell of that bird-killing cold,
Unbearable winter gusts from Ida's snows,
Or of the heat, when in his noontide couch
Windless and waveless the sea sank to rest—
But what need to complain ? Past is that misery :
Past is it for the dead, that nevermore
Will they take trouble even to rise again.
Why reckon up the number of the lost, 570
While the living grieve at fate's malignity ?
Full release from ill fortune I deem best.
For us, the relics of the Argive host,
The gain prevails, the injury is outweighed ;
Since yon bright blazoning sun o'er lands and seas
May wing the publication of our glory :
“ Once did a fleet of Argives capture Troy.
To the Gods these spoils did they nail up on all
The shrines of Hellas, a monument of pride.”
Men hearing this must praise our city and those 580
Who led her host, and thank the grace of Zeus
That worked this glory. There is no more to tell.

LEADER

Cheerfully I accept defeat in argument.
Old age is always young enough to learn.

But the house and Klytaemnestra this news most
Should interest, and make me too rich in joy.

Re-enter KLYTAEMNESTRA.

KLYTAEMNESTRA

I lifted up a jubilant cry long since,
When first by night came that fire-messenger
Telling of Ilion's capture and destruction.
And some rebuked me, saying: "So by beacons 590
Art thou persuaded that Troy now is sacked?
How like a woman's heart to soar so lightly!"
On such grounds was I proved to be deluded,
Yet did I sacrifice: and in womanish strains
Glad hymns of thankfulness throughout the town
The people lifted up in every shrine,
Where with heaped spice they nursed the fragrant flame.
But thou, why tell the full tale now to me?
Soon from the king's self shall I learn it all.
Rather, that I may best make speed to welcome 600
My revered husband to his home, (for what
More sweet to a wife's eyes than that day's light,
When to her spouse, whom heaven has saved from war,
She unbars the gate?) this to my lord declare:
Let him speed hither to meet his people's love;
And at home may he find a faithful wife,
Even such as he left her, a house-dog kind
To him she loves, to ill-wishers a foe,
And in all else unchanged, ne'er having yet
Broken one seal in all that length of time. 610
No more of dalliance (no, nor of scandal's breath)
With another man do I know, than of dipping bronze.

Exit KLYTAEMNESTRA.

AN ELDER

Big is the boast, yet weighted well with truth,
Nor unseemly for a noble wife to utter.

LEADER

Thus to thine understanding hath she spoken,
Most speciously to shrewd interpreters.
But tell me, herald, what of Menelaos ?
Tell me but whether he is returning with you
Safe to his home, our land's beloved prince.

HERALD

I know not how to make a false tale fair 620
For friends to garner gladness from it long.

LEADER

Ah, couldst thou tell a tale both true and good !
When truth conflicts with good, words cannot hide it.

HERALD

The prince is vanished from the Achaian host,
Himself and his ship too. That is the truth.

LEADER

Did he put forth from Ilion in full sight,
Or snatched from the host by storms afflicting all ?

HERALD

Like a skilled bowman thou hast hit the mark,
And in brief phrase compressed a length of woe.

LEADER

But of himself, how, as alive or dead, 630
Did rumour speak among the other crews ?

HERALD

That with sure knowledge may no man declare,
Save the Sun who fosters life through all the earth.

LEADER

Relate how rose this storm and how it ended,
Sent thus upon our fleet by angry powers.

HERALD

A day of joy no tongue of evil tidings

Should desecrate. Such rites offend the Gods.
When a gloom-visaged messenger brings home
The tragic tale of an army's overthrow,
One public wound dealt to the commonwealth, 640
And many a victim doomed from many a home
By the double-pointed weapon Ares wields,
That two-pronged horror, each fork red with gore,
If he be laden with such a pack of woes,
Well may he chant a hymn to the Avengers.
But coming with fair tidings of success
To a town rejoicing in prosperity,
How should I mingle good with ill, this tale
Of shipwreck, odious to the Achaian Gods ?

A covenant did those erst most deadly foes, 650
Fire and sea, conclude, and proved their bond
Destroying the unhappy Argive host.
In the night fierce swelling waves rose grimly threatening,
And ship against ship by the Thracian blasts
Was dashed, till butting violently together
In hurricane storm and beating rain and spray,
They vanished, lashed by that wild shepherd's whirl.
But when the bright light of the sun shone forth,
We saw the Aegaeon sea beflowered with corpses
Of drowned Achaian men and shattered ships. 660
We and our vessel, a hull yet unscathed,
Were stolen away or begged off by some God,
(No mortal was it) governing our helm.
But saviour Fortune deigned to ride the ship,
That neither in the roads should the surf swamp us,
Nor should we strike upon a rock-bound shore.
Thereafter, having scaped a watery death,
Beneath white dawn, scarce sure of our good hap,
We brooded darkly on the strange disaster
Befallen our fleet, so sorely bruised and broken. 670
And now, if any of *them* yet lives and breathes,
They speak of *us* as perished, like enough,
While we for them imagine the same fate.

Befall the best that may. For Menelaos,
 Let it be first presumed he will return.
 At worst, if any sun-ray now be finding him
 Alive and hale, then is there hope that Zeus,
 Who scarce can wish to exterminate his race,
 May contrive means to bring him safely home.
 Thus much may I relate as surely true. 680

Exit HERALD.

CHORUS

Who was he that gave the name, Str. 1
 Found so marvellously true ?
 Was it some mysterious Power, One inspired
 By prophetic glimpse of fate
 Thus to guide aright his tongue,
 Naming the bride of spear and strife
 Helen ? Alas a very Helen,
 When a Hell to hero and ship and town
 From those delicate curtains 690
 Of her costly bower she sailed forth,
 By the ruffian Zephyr wafted,
 And behind her sped a swarm of shielded hunters
 On the vanished trail of oar-blades,
 Towards green Simois' ¹ wooded shores,
 Soon now to be stript bare
 By the avenging blood-feud.

Thus to Troy a fatal bride Ant. 1
 Came she, by vindictive Wrath 700
 Unrelentingly pursued—Wrath that bides,
 Till for board and hearth, in scorn
 Of Zeus dishonoured, it may wreak
 Vengeance upon those insolent
 Honourers of the bridal anthem,
 Merry groomsmen chanting a joyous song
 Without thought for the morrow.

¹ A river of Troy.

For an altered song the years teach
To the ancient town of Priam,
And in long fierce lamentation she revileth
Paris, him, the mate of Ruin.
Yea, consumed with lamenting sighs
All her days for her children's
Piteous slaughter she mourneth.

710

A lion's whelp from its mother's breast
Still unweaned did a herdsman once
Feed and rear in his household.
First in its infancy gentle
And tame with the children it gambolled :
Gravity's self was enchanted.
Many a morsel would it win
Prettily, like a babe in arms,
Bright-eyed gazing upon the hand,
Taught to fawn by its belly.

Str. 2

720

But time passed, and at length it showed
The mood it had from its sire ; for now,
Paying thanks for its nurture,
Grimly it leapt on the sheepfold,
Snatching a feast uninvited :
Dabbled with blood was the homestead.
Panic and anguish seized the hinds
Watching the slaughterous havoc spread.
Sent by Heaven to that house it seemed,
A priest of doom and disaster.

Ant. 2

730

No less, I ween, unto the town of Ilion
There came first a seeming calm, windless and seductive,
A proud pearl, languid wealth's adornment,
Glances with gentlest arrows armed,
Love that flowers to the heart's soft anguish.
But a change came, and a sour end
To the bliss the bride had promised ;

Str. 3

741

For an ill neighbour, an ill guest
To the sons of Priam came she,
Thither sped by Zeus, God of guests,
A bride of wailing, a vampire.

749

A proverb old, framed by ancient wisdom, saith Ant. 3
That a man's fortune, once 'tis grown to highest pitch of
 greatness,
Engendering, dies not childless ever ;
For from the womb of prosperous hours
Unappeasable sorrow issueth.
But with such doctrine I hold not.
'Tis the deed of sin begetteth
In its own likeness a sequent
Generation of disaster. 760
None, save the house of the just,
Is ever blest in its children.

 Str. 4
But 'tis the wont of Insolence, past and gone, to bring to birth
Soon or late in evil men
A youthful Insolence, when the appointed time is come,
A gloom-enwrapped
Demon of revenge, terrible, invincible,
Wicked and reckless Arrogance,
Dooming the house, a black curse 770
Like to the sin that spawned it.

 Ant. 4
But Justice shines even beneath lowly roofs, smoke-
 begrimed,
Honouring the righteous man ;
And gold-bespangled palaces, where the hands are foul,
With averted eyes
Abandoning she seeks fellowship with Innocence
Flattering not the might of wealth,
False coin stamped with men's praise. 780
All to an end she guideth.

*A triumphal march. Enter AGAMEMNON, in a chariot,
followed by KASSANDRA in a wagon piled with
the spoils of Troy.*

LEADER

Come now, O king, despoiler of Troy,
Offspring of Atreus !
How shall I hail thee ? How pay thee homage,
Neither o'ershooting, nor yet scanting
Due gratulation ?
For most men practising outward shows
Hide thoughts perverse and unrighteous.
Sighs prompt and apt for another's mischance
Each hath in plenty ; yet ne'er doth an unfeigned
Sting of anguish pierce to the heart-strings :
And copying the looks of those that rejoice
They compel their lips to a counterfeit smile.
Yet should the wisely discerning shepherd
Ne'er be deceived by the eyes of fawners,
That dissembling a loyal and cordial love
Flatter him with watery affection.
And of old, when thou wast levying war
For Helen's sake, then, I deny not,
Graceless indeed was the image I formed of thee ;
Ill-steered did thy wits seem, thus to be spending
The life-blood of heroes
To redeem a consenting aduress.
But now we greet thee with heart-deep love.
Happy endings make happy labours.
Thou by inquisition erelong shalt learn
Whose stewardship of thy state is now
Proved faithful, and whose unfaithful.

790

800

AGAMEMNON

First to Argos and her native Gods my prayers
Are due, since they have aided my return,
And the justice I have wreaked upon the town
Of Priam. For the Gods, when they had heard

810

Our voiceless plea, into the vase of blood
 For Ilion's overthrowing cast their votes
 With one consent ; while to the opposite urn
 Hope of the hand came nigh, yet filled it not.
 Her smoke still witnesseth the city's fall.
 The coils of doom yet live, and dying with them
 The ashes pant forth opulent breaths of richness. 820
 For this a memorable return we now
 Must pay the Gods, since we have woven high
 Our wrathful toils, and for one woman stolen
 A town has been laid low by the Argive monster,
 The horse's brood, the grim shield-bearing folk,
 Rousing to spring what time the Pleiads set.
 Yea leaping o'er the wall like a fleshed lion
 It lapped its fill of proud and princely blood.
 This ample prelude to the Gods is due.
 Now for thy hinting—I heard and bear in mind. 830
 I say the same, and share in thy suspicions.
 Few are there to whom 'tis natural to admire
 And love the fortunate without envying.
 The spiteful poison settling to the heart
 Doubles the burden of distempered thought.
 At once by his own griefs is he weighed down,
 And groans at sight of others' happiness.
 I speak with knowledge, having thoroughly learned
 How friendship is a mirror, a shadow's ghost,
 The hypocrite's pretence to wish me well. 840
 Odysseus only, who sailed against his will,
 Once in the traces, pulled beside me loyally.
 Though whether he be living now or dead
 I know not. For the rest, of policy
 And of religion, in general council met,
 We will debate together. What is well,
 We must consult how to maintain it so ;
 But where we find need of medicinal cure,
 By wise use of the knife or cautery
 We will endeavour to expel disease. 850

Now to my palace and domestic hearth
I pass within, there first to greet the Gods,
Who sent me forth and thus have brought me home.
May victory still bide with me to the end.

*KLYTAEMNESTRA has entered during Agamemnon's
last words.*

KLYTAEMNESTRA

Townsmen of Argos, reverend counsellors,
I blush not to confess to you my love
And woman's fondness. As years pass, timidity
Wanes in us all. No witness but my own
I need to tell what grievous life was mine
All that long while my lord lay beneath Ilion. 860
First for a woman 'tis a woeful trial
To sit at home forlorn, her husband far,
Her ears filled ever with persistent tales,
One close upon the other's heels with news
Each of some worse disaster than the last.
And as for wounds, if my lord had received
As many as rumour deluged us withal,
No net had been more full of holes than he.
And had he died oft as report declared,
A second Geryon with triple body 870
A threefold vest of earth he might have boasted,
Dying once for each several shape anew.
By reason of such persistent rumours, oft
Have others loosened from my neck perforce
The hanging noose, foiling my fond desire.
Hence too the boy Orestes, the true bond
Of confidence between us, stands not here
Beside me, as he should. Nor think it strange.
He is in safe keeping with our good ally, 880
Strophios the Phokian, who has warned me oft
Of double mischief, thine own peril first
Before Troy, and the fear lest turbulent anarchy
Might risk some plot against us, as men's wont

Is to spurn him the more who has been cast down.
 Such were my reasons, honest and without guile.
 But as for me, the fountains of my tears
 Have run themselves quite dry. No drop is left.
 And my late-watching eyes have suffered hurt
 Weeping thy nightly pomp of torch-bearers 890
 Neglected ever. And the wailing gnat
 With faintest pulse of wing would startle me
 From dreams wherein I saw thee pass through more
 Than could befall within the time I slept.
 Now after all these trials, with heart unpined,
 I hail my husband watch-dog of the fold,
 The ship's securing stay, the lofty roof's
 Firm-grounded pillar, the father's sole-born child
 Or as land espied by seamen beyond hope,
 Daylight as it looks fairest after storm, 900
 A fresh spring to the thirsty wayfarer.
 Ah, sweet is all deliverance from distress !
 Such are the terms I choose to praise him fitly.
 Let envy keep afar, since woes in plenty
 We endured before. Now, most dear lord, descend
 From yonder car ; but set not upon earth
 That foot, O king, wherewith thou hast trampled Troy.
 Women, delay not. Know ye not your task ?
 Strew ye the path he treads with tapestries.
 Straight let his way be carpeted with purple, 910
 That Justice lead him to a home scarce hoped for.
 For the rest a never-slumbering vigilance
 Shall order justly as fate, I trust, intends.

AGAMEMNON

Offspring of Leda, guardian of my home,
 Lengthily, to the measure of my absence,
 Hast thou stretched out thy speech : but seemly praise,
 Such tribute should proceed from other lips.
 Moreover shame not *me* with womanish fopperies,
 Nor grovel before *me* with loud-mouthed clamour,

As though I were some oriental king ; 920
Nor with strown garments make my steps the gaze
Of envy. To the Gods such pomp belongs.
To tread, a mortal, over broidered fineries,
That to my conscience were a thing of fear.
As man, not God, I bid you reverence me.
No need of foot-cloths and embroideries :
Fame's voice rings loud enough. Heaven's greatest gift
Is a sane mind. Happy let him be called
Whose life has ended in felicity.
Acting in all things thus, naught need I fear. 930

KLYTAEMNESTRA

Come now, if judgment sanction, tell me this—

AGAMEMNON

My judgment, be assured, I shall not change.

KLYTAEMNESTRA

Would you in peril's hour have vowed this ritual ?

AGAMEMNON

Yes, had advised authority prescribed it.

KLYTAEMNESTRA

What think you Priam had done, were his this triumph ?

AGAMEMNON

On broidered robes *he* doubtless would have trod.

KLYTAEMNESTRA

Then let not human censure make thee ashamed.

AGAMEMNON

Yet mighty is the people's murmuring voice.

KLYTAEMNESTRA

Who stirs no jealousy, neither is he envied.

AGAMEMNON

'Tis not a woman's part to thirst for strife.

940

KLYTAEMNESTRA

The fortunate may yield victory with grace.

AGAMEMNON

Dost thou too deem this victory worth a contest ?

KLYTAEMNESTRA

Yield ; victor still, since vanquished willingly.

AGAMEMNON

Well, if it please thee, quick, let one unloose
My shoes, these insolent slaves beneath my feet ;
Lest, as with these I walk the sacred purples,
Some evil glance should strike me from afar.
'Tis shame enough to waste our wealth by trampling
And spoiling silver-purchased tapestries.
Of that enough. This stranger damsel now
Receive with kindness. A gentle master wins
Approving glances from God's distant eye.
None willingly endures the yoke of thralldom :
And she, the chosen flower of our rich spoil,
The army's gift, hath followed in my train.
Since then I am reduced herein to obey thee,
To the palace will I go trampling on purples.

950

KLYTAEMNESTRA

There is a sea, (and who shall drain it dry ?)
Breeding abundant purple, costly as silver,
Forever oozing fresh to dip robes in.
And of such, Heaven be thanked, good store, my king,
Is ours. This house knows naught of penury.
Full many a robe for trampling had I vowed,
Had the oracles enjoined it, when I sought
Some means to ransom home so dear a life.
Thou art the living root whence springs the foliage
That screens our house against the dog-star's glare.
So thou returning to thy home and hearth
Betokenest warmth in winter's midst returned.
And when Zeus from the unripe grape's virginity

960

970

Matures wine, then like coolness in the house
Is the advent of the crowned and perfect lord.

(As AGAMEMNON goes in)

Zeus, Zeus, who crownest all, crown now my prayers !
Thereafter as thou wilt mayst thou dispose.

Exit KLYTAEEMNESTRA into the palace.

CHORUS

Wherefore obstinately thus	Str. 1
Round my evil-boding heart	
Hovereth still this haunting breath of terror ?	
Wherefore this chant uninvited of ominous presage ?	
Can I not spit it from me far	980
Like an unexplained dream,	
So to reach firm assurance,	
The mind's contented throne ? For long the time	
Since furrowing down the sandy shore,	
Hauled astern, came the chafed	
Hawsers, when the warrior crews	
Sailed to sack the towers of Troy.	

And to-day mine eyes have joy	Ant. 1
Witnessing their safe return.	
None the less my soul within me unbidden	990
Droneth a dirge without lyre as of doom and disaster.	
Fair assurance of good hope	
Never throughly may it know.	
Not for naught my inward boding.	
In eddies of tempestuous fear my heart	
Beats on my truth-presaging breast.	
Yet, I pray, Heaven belie	
My thought's dread expectancy :	
Let it perish unfulfilled.	1000

Verily Health, grown over-great, may not abide	Str. 2
Within narrow bounds. But a thin wall stays	

Its neighbour Disease from encroaching.
 So may the ship of a man's
 Prosperous fate unawares
 Strike on a reef of unseen disaster.
 Yet if timely Caution fling
 Overboard excess of wealth
 Jettisoned from Measure's sling, 1010
 Then the house with baleful store
 Overladen shall not sink,
 Foundering like a ship in storm.
 Rich and plentiful still are the bounties of Zeus :
 Ever yearly from furrow and garner
 Famine's plague they drive afar.

Ant. 2

But to the earth let but the blood, red from the heart
 Of a man, be spilt, and who then shall have might 1020
 To recall it with hymns of enchantment ?
 Once there was one ¹ who had skill
 To raise from the dead : but his zeal
 Zeus in his jealousy checked and slew him.
 Were it not that Heaven-ordained
 Fate with fate conflicting oft
 Either so the other curbs,
 Ere my tongue could speak, my heart
 Had discharged its boding thought :
 But now muttering in the gloom, 1030
 Anguished, smouldering darkly it broods, without hope,
 While as yet there is time, to unravel
 The tangled mysteries of doom.

Re-enter KLYTAEMNESTRA.

KLYTAEMNESTRA

Thou too, get thee within, Cassandra, thou.
 Since Zeus in mercy hath brought thee to a house
 Where by the household altar thou mayst share
 The lustral water mid the crowd of slaves,

¹ Asklepios, who restored Hippolytos to life.

Descend from yon wain : be not overproud.
Alkmena's son ¹ himself, they say, was sold 1040
And endured bondage, spite of the slave's coarse fare.
If by ill hap such fate must needs be yours,
Masters of ancient wealth are luck indeed.
Those who have heaped rich piles of wealth unhop'd for,
Are ever brutal and overstrict with slaves.
From us thou shalt receive what custom bids.

LEADER

To thee she speaks, plain words, and pauses for thee.
Snared as thou art within the toils of fate,
If so thou canst, yield ; or perchance thou canst not.

KLYTAEMNESTRA

Nay, unless her speech be like a twittering swallow's, 1050
Some barbarous, unintelligible tongue,
She will understand my reasoning and obey.

AN ELDER

Go with her. As things stand, she counsels best.
Come, be persuaded : quit thy wagon throne.

KLYTAEMNESTRA

I have no leisure to stand trifling here
Outside, when round the central hearth already
The victims wait the sacrifice of fire,
Thank-offerings for this unexpected joy.
So if thou wouldst take part make no delay :
Or if my words thou canst not understand, 1060
Instead of speech signal with foreign hand.

AN ELDER

Methinks 'tis an interpreter she needs.
Her mien is like some wild new-taken creature's.

KLYTAEMNESTRA

Yes, she is mad, swayed by some vicious mood.

¹ Herakles, who was once sold as a slave to Omphale, queen of Lydia.

Hither a captive from a new-taken city
She comes, yet cannot learn to endure the bit
Till she has foamed away her rage in blood.
No more will I waste words to be so scorned.

Exit KLYTAEEMNESTRA.

LEADER

And I, for I feel pity, will not chide.
Poor wretch, come, leave thy wagon and descend. 1070
Yield to necessity and accept the yoke.

KASSANDRA

Otótototoi! O Earth! Earth! Str. 1
O Apollo! O Apollo!

ELDER 1

Why upon Loxias callest thou thus woefully?
He is not one who needeth dirgelike litanies.

KASSANDRA

Otótototoi! O Earth! Earth! Ant. 1
O Apollo! O Apollo!

ELDER 2

Once more with ill-omened cries she calls that God
Whose ears by lamentations are profaned. 1079

KASSANDRA

Apollo! Apollo! Str. 2
God of Ways, Apollo¹ indeed to me!
For me thou hast this second time in truth destroyed.

ELDER 3

Of her own woes it seems that she will prophesy.
Heaven still inspires her mind, a slave's though it be.

KASSANDRA

Apollo! Apollo! Ant. 2

¹ There is a play on words here. The name "Apollōn" suggests
"apolluōn," *destroying*.

God of Ways, Apollo indeed to me !
Ah whither hast thou led me ? yea, to what abode ?

ELDER 4

The Atreidae's palace. If thou knowest not that,
Take my assurance : thou shalt not find it false. 1089

KASSANDRA

Nay, 'tis abhorred of Heaven : much is it privy to, Str. 3
Unnatural murders and butcheries :
A human shambles : sprinkled are the floors with blood.

ELDER 5

Keen as a hound upon the scent she seems.
This trail shall lead her soon where murder lies.

KASSANDRA

There are the witnesses—there am I certified ! Ant. 3
Babes yonder bewailing their sacrifice !
Wailing their flesh by a father roasted and devoured !

ELDER 6

We were acquainted with thy mantic fame ;
But of these things we seek no prophet here.

KASSANDRA

Alas ! Ye Gods ! What is she purposing ? Str. 4
What is this new and monstrous deed, 1101
This deed of woe she purposes within this house,
Beyond love's enduring,
Beyond cure ? and aloof stands
Succouring strength afar.

ELDER 7

I know not what these prophesyings mean.
The first I guessed : with them the whole city is loud.

KASSANDRA

Oh cruel, cruel ! Verily wilt thou so ? Ant. 4
Him who hath shared thy nuptial bed,

When thou hast laved and cleansed him—how shall I tell
the end ?

Apace, see, the deed nears !

With a swift reach she shoots forth

1110

Murderous hand upon hand.

ELDER 8

Not yet do I understand. Dark riddles first,

Dim-visioned oracles perplex me now.

KASSANDRA

Ey ! Ey ! Papai, papai ! What is this now I see ? Str. 5

Some net of death 'tis surely ?

But she's the snare, who shared the bed, who shares the
crime

Of blood. Let Strife, ravening against the race,

Utter a jubilant cry

O'er the abhorred sacrifice.

ELDER 9

What fiend is this thou bidst lift o'er the house

A cry of triumph ? Thy words bring me no cheer. 1120

Back to my heart the drops, yellow and pale, have run,

As when o'er the face of one fallen in fight

Pallor of death is spread

Timed with life's sinking rays ;

And the end neareth swift.

KASSANDRA

Ant. 5

Ah ! Ah ! Beware, beware ! From his accursèd mate

Keep far the bull. In vestments

She entangles him, and with her black and crafty horn

Gores him. He falls into the cauldron's steam.

Treacherous murdering bath,

Thus thy dark story is told.

ELDER 10

I cannot boast to be a skilful judge

1130

Of oracles ; but 'tis woe I spell from these.

When from a prophet's mouth ever to mortal ears
Have good tidings sped ? 'Tis naught else but woe
Volubly chanted forth,
Teaching fear, fear alone,
In skilled monotone.

KASSANDRA

Str. 6

Alas, alas ! What hapless, sorrowful doom is mine !
For of my own sad fate, mingled with his, I tell.
Ah whither hast thou brought me now, the hapless one ?
For naught save only to share death with thee ? What else ?

CHORUS

Frenzied and heaven-posessed, ever thine own despair
In wild, lawless strains 1141
Thou art uttering, even as doth, heart-sore,
Never with wailing satiate,
Some brown nightingale.
Ityn, Ityn she sighs, mourning in anguish all
Her woe-plenished life.¹

KASSANDRA

Alas, alas ! The doom of the musical nightingale ! Ant. 6
For with a winged and soft-feathered form the Gods
Arrayed her, a gentle suffering a tearless change.
But me awaits the cleaving of a two-edged blade.

CHORUS

Agony fierce and vain, passionate mantic throes, 1150
Oh whence hast thou these,
Such a terrible chant in wild harsh cries
Fashioning forth, yet clear-voiced
In loud, rhythmic strains ?
What may it be that thus guides and inspires thy word
On its ill-boding path ?

KASSANDRA

Alas, the rape, the rape of Paris, a ruin for all Str. 7

¹ Philomela, the jealous wife of King Tereus, slew their son Itys,
and was changed into a nightingale.

His kin ! Alas, Skamander, stream of my fatherland !
Was it not there that once, there on thy banks, alas,
Tenderly I was reared ?
But now beside Kokytos ¹ and the wailful shores 1160
Of Acheron ¹ my prophet song will soon be sung.

CHORUS

What is this saying of thine, this presage all too plain ?
A child could listen and understand.
My heart smitten bleeds, as with a deadly wound,
At woe's shrill lament, misery's passionate wail,
Shattering the heart to hear.

KASSANDRA

Alas, the toils, the toils of Ilion utterly thus Ant. 7
Destroyed ! Alas, my sire's prodigal offerings,
Many a grazing herd slain for her walls ! Yet naught
Served they at all to save 1170
The city from enduring what it now endures.
And I no less must soon draw near my misery's bourne.

CHORUS

Still as at first thy lips presage of woe renew,
As though some tyrannous overmastering
Power maddened thee melodiously to sing
Of doom's swift approach, lamentable shadows of death.
Dark is the end to me.

KASSANDRA

Lo now my oracle no more through a veil
Shall look forth dimly, like a bride new-wed ;
But clear and strong towards the rising sun 1180
Shall it come blowing, and before it roll
Wave-like against the light a woe than this
More huge. No longer in riddles will I monish you.
Come, follow and bear me witness, while I scent
The traces out of deeds done long ago.
This house is ever haunted by a quire

¹ Rivers of Hell.

Of hideous concord, for the song is foul.
Lo, drunken with human blood till they wax bold
And insolent, they abide within, a rout,
Hard to expel, of revelling kindred fiends. 1190
They infest the chamber-doors chanting their chant
Of that first sin : anon they execrate
The abhorred defiler of a brother's bed,¹
Say, have I missed, or was my shaft aimed home ?
Or am I a false seer, a prating vagabond ?
Bear witness with an oath that well I know
The ancient tale of the sins of this house.

LEADER

How should an oath, though ne'er so truly plighted,
Bring remedy ? But I much admire that thou, 1199
Though bred beyond the sea, shouldst speak as certainly
Of a strange land as though thou hadst sojourned there.

KASSANDRA

The seer Apollo endowed me with this skill.

LEADER

Smitten with love perchance, God though he be ?

KASSANDRA

Hitherto shame forbade me to confess it.

LEADER

Yes, we are all more delicate in prosperity.

KASSANDRA

Vehement and mighty was the love he breathed.

LEADER

And in due course came you to child-bearing ?

KASSANDRA

I gave consent, then kept not faith with Loxias.

LEADER

Already wast thou possessed by power of prophecy ?

¹ Thyestes.

KASSANDRA

Already Troy's whole agony I foretold.

1210

LEADER

How then ! Couldst thou escape the wrath of Loxias ?

KASSANDRA

None would believe my words ; so was I punished.

LEADER

Yet to us thy words seem worthy of belief.

KASSANDRA

Ioû ! Ioû ! Oh agony !

Again dire pangs of clear vision whirl

And rack my soul with awful preludings.

Behold them there, sitting before the house,

Young children, like to phantom shapes in dream !

Boys slain by their own kindred they appear.

Their hands are filled with flesh, yea 'tis their own. 1220

The heart, the inward parts, see, they are holding,

(Oh piteous burden,) whereof their father tasted.

For this, I tell you, vengeance is devised

By a recreant lion ¹ who lurking in the bed

Keeps watch, ah me ! for the returning lord ;

My lord ; for the slave's yoke I must endure.

The fleet's high captain, Ilion's ravager,

He knows not what the abhorred she-hound's tongue

After long-drawn fawning welcome—what accurst

Treacherous stroke she aims with deadly stealth. 1230

O wickedness horrible ! Of her lord the wife

Is murderess. By what loathsome monster's name

Should I describe her fitly ? An amphisbaena ? ²

Or some cliff-lairing Skylla,² bane of mariners,

A raging demon mother, breathing havoc

Against her dearest ? And how she cried in triumph,

The all-shameless fiend, as when a battle breaks,

Feigning to glory in his safe return !

¹ Aigisthos.

² Mythical monsters.

Herein though I gain no credence, 'tis all one.
What must be, shall be ; and thou beholding soon 1240
Shalt call me in pity a prophet all too true.

LEADER

Thyestes' banquet of his own children's flesh
Shuddering I understood. Yea horror seized me
Hearing the true tale without fabling told.
But in all else I wander far astray.

KASSANDRA

Agamemnon's death I say thou shalt behold.

LEADER

Peace, wretched woman ! Hush thy ill-omened lips.

KASSANDRA

This word no Healing God can remedy.

LEADER

Not if it must be so : but Heaven avert it !

KASSANDRA

While thou prayest, the slayers are making ready. 1250

LEADER

What man is the contriver of this woe ?

KASSANDRA

Wide indeed of my warning must thou have looked.

LEADER

For I perceive not how the deed is possible.

KASSANDRA

See now, I know the Greek tongue all too well.

LEADER

So doth the Pythoness¹ : yet her words are dark.

KASSANDRA

Papai ! What is this fire ! It surges upon me.

¹ Apollo's Delphian priestess.

Ototoi ! Lykēan Apollo ! Ay me, me !
 Yonder two-footed lioness, who shares
 The wolf's couch, while the noble lion is far,
 Shall slay me, hapless woman. A vengeful charm 1260
 She is brewing, and therein will mix *my* recompense.
 Sharpening her man-slaying sword, she vows
 Bloodily to repay my bringing hither.
 Why then to my own derision bear I these—
 This wand, these mantic fillets round my neck ?
 Thee at least, ere I perish, will I destroy.
 Down to the ground I cast you, and thus requite you.
 Enrich some other, as ye did me, with doom.

She descends from the wagon.

But lo, Apollo, whose own hands put on me
 My prophet's robe, now the spectacle grows stale 1270
 Of his victim in these vestments laughed to scorn
 By friends and foes alike, and all in vain—
 And like a vagabond mountebank such names
 As beggar, wretch or starveling I endured—
 And now this seer, being finished with my seership,
 Has brought me to be murdered in this place,
 Where awaiteth me no altar of my home,
 But a block whereon the last blood yet is warm.
 Yet not forgotten of Heaven shall we die.
 There shall come one to vindicate us, born 1280
 To slay his mother and avenge his sire.
 A wandering homeless outlaw shall he return
 To cope the fabric of ancestral sin.
 For with a mighty oath the Gods have sworn,
 His father's outstretched corpse shall draw him home.
 Why then do I stand thus wailing piteously ?
 Since I saw first the city of Ilion
 Faring as it has fared, while they who conquered it
 By the just Gods are brought to such an end,
 I will meet my fate : I will endure to die. 1290
 These gates, as they were Hades' gates, I hail

And that the stroke be mortal is my prayer :
So swiftly and easily shall my blood gush forth,
And without struggle shall I close my eyes.

She moves slowly towards the doors.

LEADER

Woman, so hapless, yet withal so wise,
Long hast thou held us listening ; yet if verily
Thou knowest thine own doom, how, as some heaven-led
victim,

Patiently to the altar canst thou move ?

KASSANDRA, *pausing.*

There is no escape, friends, none, when time is full.

LEADER

Yes, but time's last hour still is found the best. 1300

KASSANDRA

The day is come. Little were gained by flight.

LEADER

Truly a patient fortitude is thine.

KASSANDRA

Such praise none heareth to whom fate is kind.

LEADER

Yet is there comfort in a glorious death.

KASSANDRA

Alas my father ! thou and thy noble children !

She approaches the doors, but starts back shuddering.

LEADER

Why dost thou start ? What terror turns thee back ?

KASSANDRA

Foul ! Foul !

LEADER

Why criest thou foul ? Is it some brainsick loathing ?

KASSANDRA

Horror this house exhales from blood-dript walls.

LEADER

Why, how ? 'Tis naught but odours of hearth-sacrifice.

KASSANDRA

'Tis such a reek as riseth from a sepulchre.

1311

LEADER

No Syrian incense luxury were that.

KASSANDRA

Yet will I enter, and there bewail my fate
And Agamemnon's. I have lived long enough.

Alas, my friends !

I clamour not like a bird that dreads a bush
Idly. When I am dead confirm my words,
When another woman for my death shall die,
And for a man ill-mated a man falls.

I claim this office as at point to die.

1320

LEADER

Poor wretch, I pity thee thy death foreknown.

KASSANDRA

Yet once more would I speak—or is not this
My own dirge rather ? To the sun I pray,
This last seen by me, that when my champions come,
My foes may pay murder's price for me too,
For this poor slave's death, their inglorious prey.
Alas for man's estate ! His happiness
Shows like a sketch, a shadow : but his misery—
'Tis a picture by a wet sponge dashed clean out.
And this is the more pitiable by far.

1330

She goes in through the doors of the palace.

CHORUS

By a prosperous Fortune a quenchless thirst
Is kindled in all men. None will reject her,

Thrust from the doors of illustrious palaces,
Saying, "Here no more shalt thou enter."
So unto this king by the Gods was assigned
Priam's town for a spoil:
Heaven-exalted home he returneth.
Yet, if for blood long shed he must pay now,
If dying for the dead he must crown doom's pile
With yet other deaths in requital,
Who of mortals hearing of this would boast
To be born to a destiny unscathed?

1340

THE VOICE OF AGAMEMNON, *within the palace.*
Ah me! I am smitten—to the heart, a mortal stroke!

LEADER

Silence! Who is that cries out as smitten by a mortal
wound?

THE VOICE OF AGAMEMNON.

Ah me! Again! A second time, a murderous stroke!

LEADER

Done is now the deed, I fear me. That is the death-groan
of the king.

Come let us consult, if haply some safe counsel we may find.

ELDER 1

This is my counsel, that we summon hither
A rescue of the townsfolk to the palace.

ELDER 2

And I say, with all speed let us burst in, 1350
And prove the foul deed while the sword yet drips.

ELDER 3

Thus far I share that counsel, that my vote too
Is all for action. It is no time for tarrying.

ELDER 3

'Tis manifest: this prelude gives clear warning
They are conspiring to enslave the city.

ELDER 5

Yes, for *we* linger ; while they, trampling down
Deliberate caution's praise, sleep not, but act.

ELDER 6

I know not what advice were best to give.
Let him who acts advise thereon himself.

ELDER 7

I say so too ; for it passes me to know
How by mere words we may raise up the dead. 1360

ELDER 8

What ! To prolong our lives shall we bow down
Beneath these foul defilers of the house ?

ELDER 9

Nay, 'tis intolerable. Death were better.
That were a milder lot than tyranny.

ELDER 10

Are we, upon the evidence of mere groans,
To surmise lightly that the king is dead ?

ELDER 11

Best know the facts ere we give vent to wrath.
To guess is not the same thing as to know.

LEADER

From all sides am I fortified in this resolve, 1370
To have clear knowledge how it fares with Atreus' son.

*As they are about to enter the palace, the scene opens
and discloses KLYTAEMNESTRA standing over
the bodies of AGAMEMNON and KASSANDRA.*

KLYTAEMNESTRA

All that I spoke before to serve the time,
I shall feel no shame now to contradict.
For how by avowing open hate to enemies,
Presumed to be our friends, could we build up

Destruction's toils too high to be overleapt ?
 By me long since against victory long-deferred
 Was planned this duel, yet at last it came.
 Here stand I where I struck, my work achieved. 1380
 Even so I wrought—this too will I not deny—
 That neither should he escape nor ward his doom.
 A blind entanglement, like a net for fish,
 I swathe around him, an evil wealth of robe.
 And twice do I smite him, till at the second groan
 There did his limbs sink down ; and as he lies,
 A third stroke do I deal him, unto Hades,
 Safe-keeper of dead men, a votive gift.
 Therewith he lies still, gasping out his life :
 And spouting forth a vehement jet of blood
 Strikes me with a dark splash of murderous dew, 1390
 No less rejoicing than in Heaven's sweet rain
 The corn doth at the birth-throes of the ear.
 The truth being such, ye grave elders of Argos,
 Rejoice, if so ye may ; but I exult.
 And were thank-offerings seemly o'er a corpse,
 Here justly might we pour them, and more than justly :
 A bowl so full of curses did this man brim,
 Who now comes home himself to drink it up.

LEADER

We marvel at thine audacity of tongue
 To glory in such terms over thy lord. 1400

KLYTAEEMNESTRA

Ye assail me as though I were a witless woman.
 But I with heart unshaken what all know
 Declare—whether thou praise me or condemn,
 'Tis all one—this is Agamemnon, mine
 Own husband, done to death by this right hand's
 Most righteous workmanship. The case stands so.

CHORUS

Woman, what earth-engendered Str.

Venomous herb, or what evil drug,
Scum of the restless sea, canst thou have tasted of,
Thus to incur the loud fury of a people's curse ?
Away thou hast cast, away thou hast cleft, away shall the
city fling thee, 1410
A monstrous burden of loathing.

KLYTAEMNESTRA

Yes, now for me thou doonest banishment,
A city's loathing and a people's curses :
Yet once no whit didst thou withstand this man,
Who recking not, as 'twere a beast that died,
Although his woolly flocks bare sheep enough,
Sacrificed his own child, that dear delight
Born of my pangs, to charm the winds of Thrace.
Was it not he you should have exiled hence
For that polluting sin ? Yet now thou seest 1420
My deed, thou art a rigorous judge. Now hear me :
Threaten thy worst ; and if on equal terms
Thou canst by force subdue me, be it so :
I yield. But if Fate otherwise ordain,
Wisdom, late though it be, shalt thou be taught.

CHORUS

Insolent is thy mood, Ant.
Thine utterance arrogant. Therefore even
As with the deed of blood frenzied is now thy soul,
So doth a gory smear fitly adorn thy brow.
With none to avenge, none to befriend, verily yet shall you
pay
Stroke for stroke in reprisal. 1430

KLYTAEMNESTRA

This likewise shalt thou hear, my solemn oath :
By the Justice here accomplished for my child,
By the Sin and Doom, whose victim here I have slain,
Not for me doth Hope tread the halls of Fear,
While yet fire on my hearth is kindled by

Aigisthos, my kind friend as heretofore.
 For yonder, no small shield for our assurance,
 Lies low the man who outraged his own wife,
 Darling of each Chrysëis under Troy,
 And by him this bond-slave and auguress, 1440
 His oracle-delivering concubine,
 Who, as his faithful couch-mate, shared with him
 The mariners' bench. But punished are they now.
 For he fare thus : and she, now she has wailed
 Swan-like her last lamenting song of death,
 Lies there, his lover, adding a delicate
 New seasoning to the luxury of my couch.

CHORUS

Oh for a speedy death, painless without a throe, Str. 1
 No lingering bedridden sickness,
 A gentle death, bearing sleep eternal, 1450
 Sleep without end ; for to us the kindest,
 Truest of guardians is lost,
 Who for a woman's sin endured toils untold ;
 Yea, and by a woman's hand he fell.

O thou from a fire-brand named, Helena,¹
 Who alone those many lives didst destroy, Str. 2
 Many past all number beneath Troy !
 Now it is thou who hast brought to its flowering
 Thus by uncleansable blood the renowned contention
 Waged once within this palace, 1460
 A woe déath-fráught for many a hero.

KLYTAEMNESTRA

Invoke not death for thy portion in grief Str. 3
 For what thou beholdest ;
 Nor yet upon Helena turn thy wrath,
 As murderess of men, as though she alone
 Many lives of Danaan men had destroyed,
 And wrought unexampled affliction.

¹ "Helane" is the Greek for "a reed-torch."

CHORUS

Ant. 1

Daemon, who o'er the house broodest, and o'er the twi-
Branching Tantalid offspring,
And through the wives, equals in destruction, 1470
Wieldest a power, to my heart an anguish !
Now on the carcase like a loathed
Carrión crow perched he stands, and gloriously
Chanting forth, croaks his tuneless hymn.

KLYTAEMNESTRA

Now thy judgment hast thou amended, Ant. 3
Since thou accusest
The thrice-gorged Daemon of this whole lineage.
For from him is bred this lust of the heart
For blood to be lapped—ere yet the old woe
Is over and gone, ever fresh gore. 1480

CHORUS

Mighty against this house Str. 4
And fell is the Daemon of whom thou tellest.
Woe ! Woe ! 'Tis an evil tale
Of deadly disaster unsated ;
Ah me, alas ! by will of Zeus,
Who causeth all, who worketh all.
For what to mortals e'er befalls without Zeus ?
What here is not by the Gods appointed ?

Ay me ! Ay me ! My king, my king ! Ephymnion
How shall I weep thee ? 1490
What word shall I speak from a loyal heart ?
In this spider's web to be lying thus caught,
By a foul death gasping thy soul forth !
Ah me, me ! couched thus, shamefully like a slave,
Stricken down by a deadly hand
Craftily armed with a cleaving sword-blade !

KLYTAEMNESTRA

Do you dare to avouch this deed to be mine ? Str. 5

Nay, fancy not even
 That in me Agamemnon's spouse you behold :
 But disguised as the wife of the man who is slain 1500
 Yonder, the ancient wrathful Avenger
 Of Atreus, that grim feaster, hath found
 Yonder a full-grown
 Victim for the ghosts of the children.

CHORUS

That thou of the blood here shed Ant. 4
 Art innocent, who shall essay to witness ?
 No, no ! Yet the Fiend avenging
 The father's sin may have aided ;
 And swept along on floods of gore
 From slaughtered kindred by the red 1510
 Deity of Strife, he comes where he must pay now
 For the caked blood of the mangled infants.

Ay me ! Ay me ! My king, my king ! Ephyraion
 How shall I weep thee ?
 What word shall I speak from a loyal heart ?
 In this spider's web to be lying thus caught,
 By a foul death gasping thy soul forth !
 Ah me, me ! couched thus, shamefully like a slave,
 Stricken down by a deadly hand
 Craftily armed with a cleaving sword-blade ! 1520

KLYTAEMNESTRA

What, did not he too wreak on his household Ant. 5
 As crafty a crime ?
 Nay but the branch he grafted upon me,
 My long-wept-for Iphigeneia,
 Even as he dealt with her, so is he faring :
 Therefore in Hades let him not boast now.
 As he sinned by the sword,
 So is death by the sword his atonement. 1529

CHORUS

In blank amaze, reft of thought's resourceful Str. 6
Counselling aid, I know not
Which way to turn, now the house is falling.
I dread the fierce, crashing storm that wrecks the home,
The storm of blood. Ceased is now the small rain.
But Justice is but whetting for some other deed
Of bale her sword's edge on other whetstones.

Ant. 2

Ay me! Earth, Earth! Would thou hadst covered me,
Or ere in the silver-sided bath
Outstretched in death I had seen him! 1540
Who shall make his grave? Who shall sing his dirge?
Who by the tomb of the deified hero weeping
Shall chant his praise and bowed down
In unfeigned grief of heart lament him? 1550

1550

KLYTAEMNESTRA

Thee it beseems not herein to concern thee : Str. 7
No, for beneath us
He bowed, he lay dead, and below shall we bury him,
Not to a mourning household's dirges,—
'Twere a graceless return for his great good-deeds
Unworthily so to bewail his soul,—
But Iphigeneia with welcome blithe,
As a daughter should,
Shall encounter her sire at the swift-flowing strait
Of Wailing, and there
Fling around him her arms and shall kiss him. 1559

1559

CHORUS

Reviling thus answereth reviling. Ant. 6
Hard to adjudge the strife seems.
The spoiler is spoiled, the slayer pays reprisal.
While on his throne Zeus abides, abides the truth :
"Who doth the deed, suffereth" : so the law stands.
Who from the house shall cast the brood of curses forth ?
The whole race is welded fast to ruin.

Ant. 6

KLYTAEMNESTRA

When you stumbled upon this saw, 'twas truth Ant. 7
 Led you. But I now
 With the Fiend of the Pleisthenid ¹ race consent
 This treaty to swear : what is done, we accept, 1570
 Hard be it to bear, if he will but quit
 Henceforth this house, and afflict with kindred
 Murder some other race instead.
 Though mine be a small
 Portion of wealth, that in full shall suffice me,
 If I thus may cleanse
 These halls from the frenzy of blood-feud.

*Enter AIGISTHOS attended by a body-guard of spear-
 men.*

AIGISTHOS

O glad dawn of the day that brings redress !
 Now can I say that, from above earth, Gods
 Look down to avenge the sorrows of mankind,
 Now that I see this man in woven robes 1580
 Of Retribution stretched dead to my joy,
 Paying in full for a father's crafty sin.
 For Atreus, lord of Argos, this man's sire,
 When by *my* sire Thyestes, his own brother,
 (To make all clear) his sovereignty was questioned,
 He banished him from country and from home.
 Thereafter, a suppliant of the hearth returning,
 Hapless Thyestes found safety so far
 That his life-blood stained not his ancestral soil
 Forthwith : but for welcome this man's impious father,
 Atreus, with zeal scarce friendly to my father, 1591
 Feigning to hold a joyful feasting day,
 Served him a banquet of his children's flesh.
 The extremities, the feet and fingered hands,
 He kept concealed, the rest disguised he set
 Before Thyestes, where he sat apart :

¹ The house of Pelops.

Who at the first unwitting took and ate
That food now proved unwholesome to his race.
Then, recognizing the unhallowed deed,
He groaned, and falls back vomiting the sacrifice,
And calls a fell doom on the sons of Pelops, 1600
Kicking the table away to aid his curse :
That thus might perish all the race of Pleisthenes.
For such cause do you see this man laid low.
And justly so did I contrive this slaughter.
For me, the third heir, with my luckless father,
He drove forth too, a babe in swaddling clothes.
Now grown to manhood Justice brings me home.
While yet I dwelt abroad I reached my foe,
Weaving this dark conspiracy's whole plot.
Thus glorious were death itself to me, 1610
Now I have seen him caught in toils of Justice.

LEADER

Aigisthos, I scorn to insult distress :
But dost thou own wilfully to have slain him,
And alone to have contrived this woeful murder ?
Know thine own head, judged guilty, shall not scape
The curses of a people flung in stones.

AIGISTHOS

Thou to prate so, benched at the lowest oar,
While those of the upper tier control the ship !
Your old age shall be taught how bitter it is
To be schooled in discreetness at your years. 1620
Bonds and the pangs of hunger are supreme
Physicians to instruct even senile minds
In wisdom. Doth not this sight make thee see ?
Kick not against the pricks, lest the wound smart.

LEADER

Thou woman, in wait for returning warriors,
Lurking at home, defiling a man's bed—
For a mighty captain didst thou plot this death ?

AIGISTHOS

These words likewise shall prove the source of tears.
The contrary to Orpheus' tongue is thine :
For he drew all things charmed by his voice along ; 1630
But thou, provoking us by childish howlings,
Shalt be haled off and by constraint made tame.

AN ELDER

Thou to be despot of our Argive folk,
Who durst not, when thou hadst contrived his death,
Durst not achieve the crime with thine own hand !

AIGISTHOS

The beguiling was the wife's part manifestly.
I was suspected, a foe by my birth.
Now with the dead king's treasure will I strive
To rule this people : but the mutinous man
I shall yoke sternly, not like a corn-fed colt 1640
In traces ; no, but grim starvation, lodged
With darkness, shall not leave him till he is tamed.

LEADER

Why, craven soul, didst thou not kill thy foe
Unaided, but must join with thee a woman,
Defilement of our country and its Gods,
To slay him ? Oh, is Orestes living yet,
That he by fortune's grace returning home
Victoriously may put both these to death ?

AIGISTHOS

Nay, if thus in word and deed you threaten, soon shall you
be taught.
Forward now, my trusty spearmen ! Here is work for us
at hand. 1650

LEADER

Forward now ! His sword unsheathing, each man stand
upon his guard.

AIGISTHOS

Nay, I too, my sword unsheathing, shrink not back, though
I must die.

AN ELDER

Die, thou sayest ? The word is welcome. Ours be now to
make it good.

KLYTAEMNESTRA

Nay forbear, my dearest husband. Let us do no further ill.
Miseries are here to reap in plenty, a pitiable crop.

Harm enough is done already : let no blood by us be spilt.
Now 'tis time that thou and these should seek their destined
dwellings each,

Ere some rash deed bring repentance—since we have come
to such a pass.

Then if haply these afflictions prove enough, there let us
stop,

Sorely smitten thus already by the heavy heel of fate. 1660
So doth a woman's reason counsel, if so be that any heed.

AIGISTHOS

But for these to let their foolish tongues thus blossom into
speech,

Flinging out such overweening words, as though to tempt
their fate,

Reft of wisdom and discretion, braving thus the ruler's
power !

AN ELDER

Never was it Argive fashion to fawn upon a villainous man.

AIGISTHOS

Well, I'll visit this upon you soon or late in days to come.

LEADER

That thou shalt not, if but Heaven guide Orestes back to
his home.

AIGISTHOS

Yes, I know full well myself how banished men will feed
on hopes.

AN ELDER

Do thy worst ; wax fat, befouling righteousness, while yet
thou mayest.

AIGISTHOS

Take my warning ; for this folly thou shalt make amends
some day. 1670

LEADER

Brag : be valiant like a cock who crows and struts beside
his hen.

KLYTAEMNESTRA

Treat with the contempt they merit these vain yelpings.
Thou and I,
Now the masters in this palace, will rule all things right-
eously.

THE CHOEPHORI, OR THE LIBATION-
BEARERS

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

ORESTES, *Son of Agamemnon.*

ELEKTRA, *daughter of Agamemnon.*

PYLADES, *son of Strophios, friend of Orestes.*

KLYTAEMNESTRA.

AIGISTHOS.

SERVANT.

NURSE.

CHORUS OF TWELVE TROJAN BONDWOMEN.

THE CHOEPHORI

The grave of Agamemnon, near the palace of Argos.

Enter ORESTES and PYLADES.

ORESTES

Nether Hermes, guardian of paternal rights,
Preserve me and fight with me at my prayer.
For to this land an exile I return,
And o'er this grave's mound on my sire I call
To hearken, to give heed.¹

* * *

this lock to Inachus ² for nurture,
This second too in token of my mourning.

* * *

I was not there, father, to wail thy death,
Nor did I stretch my hand towards thy bier.

Enter ELEKTRA and the CHORUS.

What is it I see ? What is this troop of women
Approaching in conspicuous black robes
Of mourning ? To what cause should I assign it ?
Hath some new sorrow fallen upon the house ?
Or should I guess they are bringing these libations
To appease my father in the world below ?
Naught else ? Yonder, it must be, walks Elektra,
My sister. By the bitterness of her grief
I know her. O Zeus, grant me now to avenge

10

¹ The manuscript has here been mutilated, and a number of lines have been lost.

² A river of Argolis.

My sire's death ; on my side deign thou to fight.
Pylades, stand we aside, that I may learn
More surely who these suppliant women are.

They retire.

CHORUS

"Go," said she, "from the palace bear
Libations forth, with sharp resounding stroke of hand."
Behold, my cheek is newly scarred with crimson,
Rent by the bloodily furrowing nail!
At all hours feeds my heart on lamentation ceaselessly.
A scream was heard of linen torn,
As in my agony I ripped it up,
These folds o'er my breast,
Robes cruelly mangled,
Victims of my joyless task.

30

For thrilling Fear with lifted hair, Ant. I
Prophetic to the house in dreams, and breathing wrath
From sleep, at dead of night with panic outcry
Uttered a shriek from the inner recess,
A fierce wail, bursting on the chambers where the women
 slept.

And they who read this dream declared,
Pledging a verity by heaven revealed,
That ghosts under ground,
Souls wrathfully plaintive,
Still against their slayers raged.

To avert such horror, the impious woman who sends me forth.

(Alas, Earth, Mother !)
Plans a vain appeasement
That can ne'er appease. But I
Fear to speak the words she bade.
For what redemption can there be for blood once spilt ?
Woe for this miserable hearth !

Woe for this house to ruin doomed ! 50
A sunless gloom, abhorred of men,
A shroud of hate broods o'er a house
Death-bereaved of its master.

That venerable, resistless, invincible majesty, Ant. 2
That once found a way through
The ears and hearts of all men,
Now has fallen away. 'Tis Fear
Reigns instead. Prosperity—
That among mortals is a God, and more than God. 60
But Justice, watching with her scale,
On some by daylight swiftly swoops,
Or in the borderland of dark
Her lingering wrath ripening bides :
Others utterly the night whelms.

Str. 3
Because of bloodshed drunk by Earth, its foster-nurse,
(For vengeful gore lies curded indissolvably)
Long-persisting Doom
Tarrieth till the sinner teems
With inexhaustible disease. 70

When once the bridal bower is opened, there can be Ant. 3
No remedy. So too all the waters in the world,
Into a single stream
Flowing together, strive to purge
The blood-polluted hand in vain.

But as for me, (since with cruel force the Gods Epode
Encircling my city, led me captive
From a free home, here to endure the lot of slavery,)
Obey I must, be they righteous
Or unrighteous, those who now
Usurp the governance of my life, and must suppress 80
My soul's bitter loathing. Yet beneath my robes I weep

The cruel fates that have befallen
My lords, the while with hidden grief my heart is chilled.

ELEKTRA

Maidens, who serve our house and give it order,
Since you are here to attend me in these rites
Of prayer, lend me your counsel in this doubt.
As I pour forth these funeral offerings,
How must I speak, how pray, to appease my sire ?
Shall I say that I bring a gift of love
From wife to loving husband—from my mother ? 90
Nay, that I dare not. I know not what to say
As I pour this offering on my father's tomb.
Or shall I speak this customary phrase :
Do thou requite with blessing those who send
These wreaths—such recompense as their sin deserves ?
Or with no word, no rite, as when my father
Died, shall I pour this forth for earth to drink,
Then go back home, like one that casts out filth,
Flinging the vessel from me without a glance ?
In these doubts aid me with your counsel, friends ; 100
For in the house one common hate is ours.
Hide naught within thy heart for fear of someone.
For destiny awaits alike the free
And those who are subject to another's hand.
If thou canst give me wiser counsel, speak.

LEADER

Revering like an altar thy father's tomb,
I will speak, as thou biddest, my heart's thought.

ELEKTRA

Speak, as in reverence for my father's grave.

LEADER

While you pour, utter blessings for the loyal.

ELEKTRA

To whom shall I give that name among our friends ?

LEADER

First to thyself, and all who hate Aigisthos.

111

ELEKTRA

For myself must I pray then, and for thee ?

LEADER

You know the truth : 'tis yours now to decide.

ELEKTRA

Whom else then to this company should I add ?

LEADER

Remember Orestes, banished though he be.

ELEKTRA

'Tis well said. Wisely have you admonished me.

LEADER

Next, mindful of those guilty of that bloodshed—

ELEKTRA

Well, what ? Direct me : instruct my ignorance.

LEADER

Pray that upon them come some god or mortal—

ELEKTRA

To judge or to avenge ? Which do you mean ?

120

LEADER

Say simply this : “ one to take life for life.”

ELEKTRA

Is that a holy prayer for me to utter ?

LEADER

Why not ?—to requite foes with injury !

ELEKTRA

Mighty Herald between worlds above and under,

Aid me, O nether Hermes, summoning

The powers beneath the earth to hear my prayers

Uttered for wrongs done to a father's home,

Earth too herself, who brings all things to birth,

Rears them, and to her womb receives them back.
 Pouring this lustral water to dead men,
 I call upon my sire : Have pity on me. 130
 With dear Orestes kindle thy dark halls.
 For now we are homeless vagrants, sold away,
 By her that bore us, to purchase her a husband,
 Aigisthos, her accomplice in thy murder ;
 I a mere slave, Orestes from his wealth
 An exile, while they in overweening pride
 Are revelling in the luxury thou didst toil for.
 But hither in good hour may Orestes come :
 That is my prayer to thee. Oh hear it, father.
 And for me grant that I prove chaster far 140
 Than was my mother, more innocent my hand.
 For us these prayers. But for our adversaries
 One to avenge thee, father, I bid rise,
 And that thy slayers justly in turn be slain.
 Thus do I interrupt my prayer for good,
 Uttering against *them* this my prayer for evil.
 To us do thou send blessings from below,
 Sped by the Gods, and Earth, and conquering Justice.
 Such are the prayers wherewith I pour these offerings.
 Your due part is to crown them with flowers of wailing,
 Chanting aloud a paean for the dead. 151

CHORUS

Shed we the tear that falls with a splash and is gone,
 Gone as our lost, fallen lord,
 In tune with the splash of unholy drops,
 This impious offering poured to avert
 Evil and good alike. Hearken, I pray thee ! Hearken !
 O revered master, rouse thy *dárk sôul* to hear.
 Otótótótótótotoi !
 Oh *whén*, *whén* will a man who wields the spear
 Come to redeem the house, brandishing in his hand 160
 The Scythian bow, bent in *wár's* *deádlý* stress,
 One who will close and thrust with sword firmly gripped ?

ELEKTRA

Earth now has drunk, my sire received our offerings.
But here is strange news I would have you share.

LEADER

Tell it me, though my heart with fear is dancing.

ELEKTRA

Here on the grave a severed tress I see.

LEADER

Whose is it ? What man's, or deep-girdled maiden's ?

ELEKTRA

So easy a riddle none should fail to guess. 170

LEADER

How ? Let my age be instructed by thy youth.

ELEKTRA

There is no one but I who might have cut it.

LEADER

Yes, they are foes who should have mourned him thus.

ELEKTRA

Yet this to the eye seems strangely like in feather. . . .

LEADER

To whose hair do you mean ? I pray you, tell me.

ELEKTRA

Like our own, strangely similar to the eye.

LEADER

Can it then be Orestes' secret gift ?

ELEKTRA

His are the ringlets it resembles most.

LEADER

But how could *he* have ventured to come hither ?

ELEKTRA

He has *sent* a lock, shorn offering to his sire. 180

LEADER

Thy words give me more cause for tears than ever,
If ne'er again his foot shall touch this soil.

ELEKTRA

In my heart too a surge of bitter thought
Rises : I feel a dagger's piercing stab ;
And from my eyes break thirstily forth and fall
Some few drops from the pent-up stormy flood,
When I behold this lock : for how suppose
That any native else might own this hair ?

Nor yet was it the murderess who cut it,
My mother, she who towards her children bears
No mother's feelings in her impious heart.
But how to affirm with surety that this offering
Adorned the head of him whom most I love,
Orestes !—yet I am flattered by the hope.

Alas !

Would that it had a kindly warning voice,
That so I might not waver between two minds,
Being bidden plainly spurn this lock away,
If it were severed from a hated head ;
Or else, being kin, would it might share my grief,
Gracing this tomb, and honouring my sire.

Nay, but the Gods, whom we appeal to, know
By what storms we, like mariners, are tossed
And whirled. Yet if we are destined to find safety,
From a small seed may grow a mighty stem.

But look ! Tracks on the ground ! a second proof !—
Tracks of feet—similar—and like my own.

Yes, here are outlines of two different footsteps,
Those of himself, and those of some companion.
The tracings of the tendons and the heels
Agree in measurement with the prints of mine.
Oh this is agony, destroying thought.

ORESTES, *coming forward.*

Tell the Gods that thy prayers have been fulfilled,
And pray hereafter for like good success.

ELEKTRA

Why, for what boon have I to thank them now ?

ORESTES

The sight of that for which thou hast prayed so long.

ELEKTRA

Whom canst thou know that I was summoning ?

ORESTES

Whom but Orestes, the idol of thy soul ?

ELEKTRA

And what proof have I that my prayers are answered ?

ORESTES

Here am I. Seek no nearer friend than me.

ELEKTRA

O Sir, is this some snare you are weaving round me ?

ORESTES

Against myself then am I framing it.

221

ELEKTRA

I see you wish to mock at my afflictions.

ORESTES

Then at my own too, if indeed at thine.

ELEKTRA

As if thou wert Orestes then I bid thee. . . .

ORESTES

Nay, 'tis himself thou seest and wilt not know.

Yet when you saw this lock of mourning hair,

Your mind took wing and deemed 'twas me you saw—

So too when you were questing in my footprints,

Your own brother's, proportioned like yourself.
Look well : 'twas from this place I cut the tress. 230
And see this weaving, your own handiwork,
These batten-strokes, these beasts in the design.
Contain yourself : leave not thy wits for joy :
For those who are nearest hate us both, I know.

LEADER

O thou beloved child of thy father's house,
Thou hope of saving seed watered by tears,
Trust in thy strength, and win thy heritage back.

ELEKTRA

O thou sweet eye, glancing for me with love
Fourfold ! To thee must needs be given the name
Of father : to thee falls the love I owe 240
To a mother—mine has merited utmost hate—
And to a sister, cruelly sacrificed.
Proved now a brother true, I reverence thee.
Only may Power and Justice, and with these
Zeus, mightiest of all, be on thy side.

ORESTES

Zeus, Zeus, look down ; witness what here is done.
Behold the orphan brood of an eagle sire
That perished in the twines and writhing coils
Of a fell viper. Fatherless are they, gripped
By hungry want, for strength is not yet theirs 250
To bring home to the nest their father's prey.
Like them mayst thou behold me ; and her too,
Elektra, children fatherless and forlorn,
Both suffering the same exile from our home.
If thou destroy these younglings of that sire ;
Who worshipped thee with bounteous gifts, where else
Wilt thou find hands so generous of rich feasts ?
And as, if the eagle's brood thou shouldst destroy,
No more couldst thou send signs that men could trust,
So, if this royal stem be withered wholly, 260

No altars will it serve on days of sacrifice.
Save it. From lowness thou canst raise to might
A house that now seems to lie fallen indeed.

LEADER

O children, saviours of the ancestral hearth,
Silence, I pray, lest someone overhear,
And to ease a babbling tongue report all this
To those that rule. Ah, may I one day watch
Their corpses in the spluttering resinous flame !

ORESTES

Never shall Loxias² mighty oracle
Betray us. He it was who bade me endure 270
This peril, threatening oft with voice uplifted
Woes to make cold as winter my warm heart,
If I avenged not those that slew my sire—
Who bade me slay them even as they slew,
Scowling upon the offer of all their wealth :
Else, he said, I myself with my own life
Should pay the debt after woes long and dire.
How the powers of underground appease their wrath,
His voice proclaimed to men, citing such plagues
As leprous ulcers crawling o'er the flesh, 280
Eating its health away with cruel jaws :
And how upon this plague a white down grows.
Yet other onslaughts of the avenging fiends
Sprang from a father's blood, so he foretold :
For the unseen weapon of the nether powers,
Stirred by slain kinsmen calling for revenge,
Frenzy and causeless terror of the night,
(Seen clearly, while in darkness the eyebrows twitch,)
Perturb and harass ; till by the brazen scourge
His marred carcase is chased forth from the town. 290
Nor is it for such outcasts to partake
The winebowl, nor the genial libation.
A father's wrath unseen drives him away
From altars : none receives, none lodges with him.

At last without rites, without friends, he dies,
 Utterly wasted to a vile mummied corpse.
 Should I not trust such oracles as these ?
 Though I trust them not, the deed must yet be done.
 For many motives to one end concur :
 The God's commands ; my great grief for my father : 300
 Besides there is my poverty that galls me :
 Then shame that my world-famous countrymen,
 Whose glorious valour compassed Troy's destruction,
 Should thus be subject to a pair of women.
 For a woman he is at heart, soon shall he learn.

CHORUS

O powerful Fates, let Zeus now send
 Prosperous fortune
 Unto us, whom righteousness aideth.
 " Enmity of tongue for enmity of tongue
 Be paid in requital," cries Justice aloud, 310
 Exacting the debt that is owed her.
 " Murderous blow for murderous blow
 Let him take for his payment." " To the deed its reward !"
 So speaks immemorial wisdom.

ORESTES

Father, O father of woe, what word 315
 Am I to speak, or what do
 To waft this message afar to thee,
 Where in the grave thou couchest ?
 As darkness and light are sundered,
 Loving rites cannot reach thee, 320
 The dirge chanted of old to praise
 Kings of the house of Atreus.

CHORUS

My son, the ravening jaw 325
 Of fire subdues not wholly
 The spirit of him who is dead.
 Someday his mood he revealeth.
 When the slain man is bewailed, then

Is the injurer discovered.
And a rightful lamentation
For a parent hunts and ranges
With wide séarch, till the guilt is tracked down. 330

ELEKTRA

Hear then, O father, as we in turn Ant. 1
Utter our tearful anguish.
Thy two children are we whose dirge
Wails for thee o'er thy grave-mound.
The suppliant and the exile
To thy tomb we draw near.
What here is well ? What is free from woe ?
Vain with our doom to wrestle.

LEADER

Yet even so God, if he will, may change Str. 3
Our dirge to a chant of happier strain, 341
Not lamentations at a tomb, but instead
Shall a pæan of joy in the royal halls
With a loving pledge welcome a friend home.

ORESTES

Would that in sight of Troy, Str. 4
By some Lycian hero's spear
Thy déath's wound, father, had been dealt thee.
Bequeathing so glory to us thy children,
At home praise, abroad fame,
The admired gaze of áll éyes, 350
Thou hadst lain in a tomb piled
With alien earth : an easy
Burden for us had that been. . . .

CHORUS

To friendship welcome there Ant. 2
By nobly fallen heroes,
A prince in the underworld
Famed, revered and majestic,
A companion to the highest

Who are rulers of that dark realm :
 For in life thou wast a monarch 360
 Over kings who wield the sceptre
 That dooms men and commands obedience.

ELEKTRA

Nay, but beneath Troy walls, Ant. 4
 Father, let us not wish that thou
 Hadst died, nor mid héaps of slaughtered warriors
 Been laid in earth, there beside Skamander.
 Ah would those that slew him
 By a like death had died first !
 From afar had we thén heard
 The tale of their end, by all these 370
 Miseries unafflicted.

LEADER

Finer than gold, dear child, yea greater Mesode
 Then even Hyperbórean ¹ bliss are the hopes
 Thou utterest. Wishing is easy.
 Yet, (for the two-fold lash of our thudding
 Scourge goeth home,) your cause underground
 Already finds champions. Foul with pollution
 Are the crime-sullied hands of the loathly usurpers.
 Victory must side with the children. 379

ORESTES

This will have pierced to its aim, Str. 5
 Sped like a shaft from the bow !
 Zeus ! Zeus, that from below dost send
 Tardily smiting vengeance
 On man's sinful and reckless ill deeds,
 Sins that conceive an avenging offspring !

CHORUS

Be it mind to lift a lusty chant of joy Str. 6
 Over the stroke that fells

¹ According to the Greeks an earthly paradise existed in the Hyperborean region, or the country behind the north wind.

The man, and the evil woman
Slain by his side. For wherefore
Hide the divine foreboding
That haunts me ? A fierce wind of passion, 390
Breathing revenge, hatred and wrath,
Blows against my spirit's prow.

ELEKTRA

When with a stroke of his hand Ant. 5
Cleaving the heads of our foes,
Alas ! when will Zeus put forth his might,
Granting our land assurance ?
To right wrong I appeal for justice.
Hear me, O Earth, and ye powers of Hades.

CHORUS

Nay, it is law that the life of a man, Ant. 3
Shed in drops to the ground, should require in return 401
Fresh blood. The Avengeress calls upon havoc :
From the graves of the slain she will bring forth woe
Upon woe, ever newly arising.

ORESTES

How long then, Princedom of the underworld ? Str. 7
Hither, ye spirits that venge the slain, hither behold !
Behold in evil plight the last remaining brood
Of Atreus' house, dispossessed,
Dishonoured ! Who now shall help us, O Zeus ?

CHORUS

With violence now my heart within me throbs, Ant. 6
Hearing this plaintive outcry. 411
Now am I all despairing :
Back to my heart the blood runs
Dark as the words I hearken.
But soon hope and courage returning
Lift me and drive anguish away,
Dawning brightly on my soul.

ELEKTRA

What spéech élse mîght avail us save of those Ant. 7
Miseries we have endured from her by whom we were born ?
For all her blandishments, yet shall not théy be soothed.
For like a grîm wólf, the mood 421
Our mother gave, cannot be placated.

CHORUS

Str. 8

I beat my breast to an Arian ¹ dirge, and in the mode
Of Kissian ¹ wailing-women slaves,
With clutching and bespattering strokes behold my hands
In quick succession uplifted higher and higher still
To fall in battering blows, until my miserable
Belaboured head resounds beneath the cruel shock.

ELEKTRA

Oh fie ! Cruel fiend ! Str. 9
Thou wicked mother ! Cruel was that funeral. 430
Without his folk, him, a king,
Without lament, unbewailed,
Thou hadst the heart so to inter a husband.

ORESTES

No rites at all ! Was it so then ? Oh shame ! Str. 10
Nay verily, for my father's shaming
By help of héaven shé shall pay,
By help of thése hánds of mine.
And then, when I have slain her, let me perish.

CHORUS

This also know, his limbs were lopped and mangled. Ant. 10
'Twas her design, hers who so could bury him, 440
To make his death such that thou
Shouldst not endure still to live.
Thou now hast héárd hów thy sire was outraged.

ELEKTRA

Ant. 8

'Twas thus my father perished : and I the while was kept
Aloof, despised, of no account.

¹ Persian.

Shut in and kennelled, as I had been a vicious hound,
In mood more ready for tears than laughing, I wept and
poured
My miserable lamentation forth from where I lurked.
What I have told thee, grave it deep within thy soul. 450

CHORUS

Yea hóme through thine ears Ant. 9
Let sink the tale within a firm and tranquil mind.
For thus it was : such the deed.
Be stubborn thou to prove the event.
A temper stern as steel befits the avenger.

ORESTES

On thee I call ; father, stand beside thine own. Str. 11

ELEKTRA

And I to his, all in tears, would add my voice.

CHORUS

And we too áll crý aloud with one accord :
Oh hearken ; visit thou the light :
Aid us against our foes' hate. 460

ORESTES

Ant. 11
Let sword with sword, right encountering meet with right.

ELEKTRA

Ye Deities, judge the right with righteousness.

CHORUS

A shudder steáls ó'er me, as I hear such prayers.
Though destiny hath bided long,
Yet shall your prayer reveal it.

CHORUS

Alas for the inbred woe ! Str. 12
Bloody and harsh the discord
Struck by the hand of Ruin !
Alas, tuneless and heavy sorrows !
Alas, pain unappeased for ever ! 70

Thus only the house may staunch
Wounds such as these. Its own sons,
None from without, shall cure it
By grim shedding of blood for blood shed.
The Gods under the earth so hymn we.

Ant. 12

Hearken, we pray, ye netherworld Deities :
Grant our petition : with ready will send
Victorious aid to the children.

ORESTES

O father, who wast so unkingly slain,
Grant, I implore thee, lordship in thy house.

480

ELEKTRA

A like boon, father, do I ask of thee :
Let me escape, and let Aigisthos perish.

ORESTES

Yea so for thee would solemn funeral feasts
Be stablished : ' else, when savoury burnt offerings
Are paid to Earth, no tribute shall be thine.

ELEKTRA

I too shall bring thee offerings from my dower,
When I am wedded from a father's house,
And will revere this tomb before all else.

ORESTES

O Earth, release my sire to guide me in fight.

ELEKTRA

O Persephassa,¹ grant fair victory.

490

ORESTES

Remember the bath wherewith they slew thee, father.

ELEKTRA

Remember what strange cloak-net they devised.

ORESTES

In fetters no smith forged thou wast snared, father.

¹ Persephone, goddess of the underworld.

ELEKTRA

Yes, in a wrapping plotted for thy shame.

ORESTES

Art thou not wakened by these tauntings, father ?

ELEKTRA

Dost thou not lift up thy beloved head ?

ORESTES

Either send Justice to fight beside thine own,
Or grant us the like grip of them in turn,
If thou by victory wouldst retrieve defeat.

ELEKTRA

Hearken once more to this last cry, father. 500
Behold these nestlings crouching at thy tomb,
And pity us both, thy daughter and thy son.

ORESTES

And blot not out this seed of Pelops' line :
For thus, though thou hast died, thou art not dead.

ELEKTRA

For children are voices that preserve the fame
Of one dead, and like corks buoy up the net,
Rescuing from the deep the cords below.

ORESTES

Hearken ! 'Tis for thy sake we are wailing thus.
Thyself art saved, if this plea thou wilt honour.

LEADER

Come, amply have you lengthened out your dirge, 510
Due tribute to the tomb's unwept dishonour.
For the rest, since now thy heart is set on deeds,
Get thee to work forthwith, and test thy fortune.

ORESTES

That will I. Yet first it were well to enquire,
Wherefore she sent libations ; what could move her
So late to make amends for wrongs past cure ?

To a man dead and witless did she send
This paltry boon ? I cannot think 'twas so.
Yet the gifts are too small for the offence.
Though a man poured forth his all to atone one deed 520
Of blood, 'twere labour lost, the saying goes.
Gladly, if you know it, would I learn the truth.

LEADER

I know, my son ; for I was there. By dreams
And prowling terrors of the night perturbed,
The godless woman sent these offerings.

ORESTES

And did you learn the dream ? Then tell it me.

LEADER

She gave birth in her dream to a snake, she says.

ORESTES

How did her story end ? What was its sum ?

LEADER

She couched it like a babe in swaddling bands.

ORESTES

For what food did it crave, this new-born monster ? 530

LEADER

She offered it her own breast in her dream.

ORESTES

Surely the foul thing left not the teat unhurt ?

LEADER

No, with the milk it sucked a curd of blood.

ORESTES

Be sure, such a vision cannot be for naught.

LEADER

Then she awoke from sleep shrieking for terror ;
And many a lamp, whose light the dark had blinded,
Flared up throughout the house at the queen's need.

Therefore these pious offerings she sends,
In hope to lance and cure the mischief so.

ORESTES

Now to this Earth and to my father's grave 540
I pray that in me this dream may be fulfilled.
And it tallies, as I read it, at all points.
If the snake came from the same place as I,
And thereupon was wrapped in swaddling clothes,
And gaped about the breast that suckled me,
Mingling the kindly milk with curds of blood,
While she for terror shrieked aloud thereat,
Then surely she who nursed so dread a prodigy
Must die by force, and I, enserpented,
Shall be her slayer, as this dream foretells. 550

LEADER

I accept thy divination of these signs.
So may it prove. Teach now thy friends their part,
Telling what each should do or should not do.

ORESTES

'Tis simple. Let Elektra go within.
These women I bid keep concealed my plan.
Then as by craft they slew a noble prince,
By craft they shall be caught in the same noose,
And perish, even as Loxias foretold,
Sovereign Apollo, a prophet never false.
For like a traveller, and in full disguise, 560
To the main gate will I come with Pylades here,
A guest to the house, aye and its spear-guest too.
And both of us will don Parnassian speech,
Copying the accent of a Phokian tongue.
But say no door-keeper gives us glad welcome,
Because the house is woe-struck by the Gods :
Then we shall wait, till, as he passes by,
Someone may thus give voice to his surmise :
" Why should Aigisthos, if he is here at home,
Knowingly shut his gate against his visitor ? " 570

Then once I have crossed the threshold of the court,
 And found *him* seated in my father's throne,
 Or if afterwards he meet me face to face
 And speak—dropping his craven eyes, be sure—
 Ere he can say, “Whence comes this stranger?” dead,
 Snared by my nimble weapon, will I smite him.
 The Avenging Spirit, stinted ne’er of slaughter,
 Shall drink in blood unmixed her third last draught.
 Do thou then keep good watch within the house.
 So that our plot may piece together rightly. 580
 And you, I charge you, bear a cautious tongue
 For speech or silence as the moment needs.
 Last thou, friend, follow me and stand at watch
 To succour me in the contest of the sword.

Exeunt ORESTES, ELEKTRA and PYLADES.

CHORUS

Many woes, strange and dire, Str. 1
 Many terrors earth has bred;
 And the sea's vast embrace far and wide
 Teems with baleful monsters;
 While from the interspace there flash
 Fiery lightnings that destroy 590
 The birds and the four-footed beasts: of the hurricane
 wrath
 Of winds too, marvels might be told.

But of man's overbold Ant. 1
 Pride of spirit none may tell,
 Nor of how passion's wild, reckless power,
 Fraught with human ruin,
 Rules o'er woman's stubborn mind.
 When perverse rebellious love
 Masters the feminine heart, then destroyed is the union
 Of mated lives for beast or man. 601

Whoso is not fledged with wings of thought, Str. 2
 Let him learn the tale,

How that heartless queen,¹
 Thestius' daughter, slew her son, wittingly,
 Urged by fire-enkindling forethought,
 Consuming the red brand, coeval
 With her child ² from the hour he came
 Wailing forth from his mother,
 Matched in years with his span of life 610
 Till the day by the Fates doomed.

Next with loathing might we tell of her, Ant. 2
 The daughter murderous,³
 Who, by foes seduced,
 Wrought the death of one she loved, when, beguiled
 By the gold-forged Cretan necklace,
 The bribe sent by Minos, she plundered
 Nisus ⁴ of his immortal hair,
 While in slumber unguarded 620
 He breathed—ah, the dog-hearted wench!
 Came then Hermes ⁵ and took him.

Str. 3

But since of crimes cruel and heartless I have told. . . .

A SINGLE VOICE, *interrupting*.
 Yet 'tis no time now to speak of that unloved
 Wedlock, by the house abhorred,
 Nor yet of plots schemed by a woman's cunning wits
 Against a *mán fámed* in arms,
 A man whose might even his foemen held in awe.
 A hearth I praise where no fiery passions flame,
 A woman's unaudacious spirit. . . . 630

CHORUS Ant. 3
 But among all sins, 'tis the Lemnian ⁶ stands the first

¹ Althaia.

² Meleager.

³ Skylla.

⁴ The father of Skylla.

⁵ The Messenger of Death.

⁶ The men of Lemnos, having slighted the worship of Aphrodite, were caused by her to take certain Thracian captive women as their paramours, and were consequently all murdered by their neglected wives.

The tidings I come bringing are for them.
And make haste ; for night's dusky chariot
Comes on apace. 'Tis time we travellers found
Some public guest-house to cast anchor in.
Let someone in authority come forth ;
A woman it may be : but a man were seemlier :
For speech is free then : no constraint or shame
Compels talk to be veiled. Man speaks to man
Boldly, and shows his meaning by clear proofs.

660

Enter KLYTAEMNESTRA.

KLYTAEMNESTRA

Friends, speak your wishes. At your service here
Are all such comforts as beseem this house,
Warm baths, and to refresh your weariness,
Soft couches, and true eyes to attend your wants.
But if you have affairs of weightier counsel,
That is work for men, to whom we will impart it.

670

ORESTES

I am a Daulian traveller from Phokis,
As at my own risk I was carrying goods
To Argos, where now my long journey ends,
There met me a man I knew not, nor he me,
Strophios, a Phokian, so I learnt in talk.
Having asked my way and told me his, he said :
" Since anyhow you are bound for Argos, Sir,
Bear heedfully in mind to tell his parents
That Orestes is dead. Do not forget.
So whether his friends resolve to fetch him home,
Or bury him, our denizen and guest
Forever, bring me their injunctions back.
Meanwhile the curved sides of a brazen urn
Enclose his ashes, in due form bewept."
I have told my whole message. Whether now
I am speaking to the rulers, and his kindred,
I know not ; but his parent should be told.

680

690

KLYTAEMNESTRA

Ah me ! we are taken ruthlessly by storm.
O thou all-conquering Curse that haunts this house,
How wide thy vision ! with sure aim thy shafts
Strike even that we have hidden with care afar,
Stripping my dear ones from me, unhappy woman !
And now Orestes—for he prudently
Was keeping his foot out of the deadly mire—
But now what healing hope of fine carouse
In the house there was, thou writest down fulfilled.

ORESTES

Well, for my part, I could have hoped with guests 700
So princely, to commend myself, and earn
A welcome by more fortunate news. For where
Is goodwill greater than from guest to host ?
But, to my thought, it were an impious fault
Not to fulfil a task like this for friends,
After my promise and your hospitality.

KLYTAEMNESTRA

Nay, due reward shall none the less be thine,
Nor shall you find yourself less welcome here.
Some other would have brought this news instead.
But now 'tis the hour when guests, tired by the day's 710
Long journey, should be tended as befits.
Take him and lodge him well in the men's chambers
With these his fellow-travellers and attendants.
Let them receive there what beseems our house.
I warn you, for their comfort you must answer.
This news meanwhile we will impart to those
Who bear rule here. Having no lack of friends,
We will take counsel on this sad event.

Exeunt all into the palace.

The CHORUS enters.

LEADER

Ah slaves of the house, loyal and faithful,

How soon shall our lips
Show proof of our zeal for Orestes ?

720

CHORUS

O reverend Earth, O reverend Mound,
Thou that beneath thee coverest the outworn
Dust of the armed fleet's kingly commander,
Deign now to hearken, deign to give succour.
Now is the hour when guileful Deceit
Must enter to aid us, and Chthonian Hermes,
Patron of stealth, stand sentinel over
This deadly encounter of sword-blades.

Enter NURSE from within.

LEADER

Our traveller, it seems, is working mischief.
Yonder I see Orestes' nurse in tears.
Where are you going, Kilissa, through the gates,
With grief to bear you company unhired ?

730

NURSE

The mistress bids me summon Aigisthos home
As quick as may be, to meet these stranger guests,
And learn more certainly as man from man
This new-told rumour—while before her servants
Behind eyes of pretended gloom she hides
A laugh at work done excellently well
For her, but miserably for this house,
Hearing the tale these strangers told so plain.
That heart of his I warrant will be glad
When he has learnt their story. Wellaway !
How all that ancient coil of mingled miseries,
So hard to bear, betiding in this house
Of Atreus, grieved the heart within my breast !
But never have I endured a woe like this.
All other troubles patiently I bore :
But dear Orestes, the babe I spent my soul on,
Whom straight from his mother's womb I took to nurse. . . .

740

And then those shrill cries summoning me by night, 751
And all those weary tasks, mere trouble wasted
They were : for a senseless thing one needs must nurse
Like a dumb beast—how else ?—by humouring it.
The cry of a boy in swaddlings tells you nothing,
Whether hunger, thirst or wanting to make water
Grips him : a child's young body will have its way.
These wants I would forecast ; but often, it may be,
Would guess wrong, and so have to cleanse his linen,
Laundress and nurse reckoning as one office. 760
Aye, these two handicrafts both fell to me,
When I received Orestes from his father.
Now, woe is me ! I learn that he is dead.
So I must fetch the man who has brought this house
To ruin. Glad will he be to hear my tale.

LEADER

Tell us, how does she bid him come arrayed ?

NURSE

" Arrayed ? " Speak plain. I understand you not.

LEADER

Whether with escort, or may be alone ?

NURSE

She bids him bring a bodyguard of spearmen.

LEADER

Bear no such message then to our hated master, 770
But bid him come alone, that he may hear
Without alarm, at once, with cheerful heart.
A bent word by the bearer is made straight.

NURSE

Can you be looking kindly on these tidings ?

LEADER

But what if Zeus should change ill winds to fair ?

NURSE

How, when Orestes, hope of the house, is gone ?

LEADER

Not yet. A seer of small skill might know that.

NURSE

What! Know you aught outside what has been told?

LEADER

Go, take thy message. Do as thou wert charged.

That which concerns the Gods is their concern. 780

NURSE

Well, I will go, following thy advice.

May it prove all for the best by the Gods' grace.

Exit NURSE.

CHORUS

Hear me now! Hear my prayer, thou, O Zeus, Str. 1

Father of the Olympian Gods.

Grant that fair fortune bless loyal hearts

That long to behold righteousness here prevail.

So do I pray. Justice prompts

Every word. Zeus, do thou uphold it.

Ey! Ey! Succour *him*, there

Ephymnion

In the halls, *him*, not his foes, Zeus;

790

For if him thou exaltest,

Doubly and triply, if so it please thee,

Shall thank-offerings recompense thee.

See the colt, sired by a man dear to thee,

Ant. 1

Yoked in danger's chariot.

Rule his steps: even-paced bid him speed

With steady and swift rhythmical energy,

Till, behold, over the plain

On to the goal stride by stride he hastens.

Ye who dwell within the house,

Str. 2

Shrined in nooks filled with gladsome store of wealth, 801

Listen, O kindly Deities.

Suffer the blood of deeds done long ago
Now by fresh revenge to be redeemed.
Therefore may elder bloodshed ne'er beget
Within this house younger bloodshed any more.

God of the vast cavern and beauteous temple,¹ Mesode
Grant us with flowers gaily to garland a man's house ;
Grant that our welcoming eyes
Soon may behold it emerge 810
Radiant out of the veil of dark gloom.

Rightly here should Maia's son ² Ant. 2
Lend his aid. None so fairly, if so he wills,
Safe to harbour wafts a deed.
Many a time his purpose brings to light
Secrets : yet when speech he would obscure,
Darkness of night he wraps around men's eyes ;
And even by day none the plainer doth he seem.

Then, as the voyage nears its end, Str. 3
No dirge of wailers, but a glad 820
Paeon o'er the house set free
Will we launch, women's voices
Blent in a blithe wafting song :
" The vessel speeds.
Mine is the gain, mine that riseth here : the curse
Now departs from those I love."

Ey ! Ey ! With a firm heart, Ephymnion
When the time comes for the stern deed,
Though her lips plead, " O my child ! " yet
Rush on her with the cry, " My father ! "
Nor shrink back from the cruel death-stroke. 830

Bearing a heart, strong as Perseus Ant. 3
Once within his bosom bore,

¹ Apollo.

² Hermes.

Of thy friends, both under earth
And above, be thou champion.
Bitter revenge claims thy zeal,
Secret crime,
Bloody and dire : yet thereby the guilt-defiled
Murderer shalt thou destroy.

Enter AIGISTHOS from without.

AIGISTHOS

I am come in answer to a summoning message.
A strange tale has been brought, so I am told,
By travellers, news of no pleasant sort. 840
Orestes' death—a horror-dripping burden
Would that prove, were it too laid on this house
Already mauled and festering with past bloodshed.
What should I think ? Is it the living truth ?
Or else mere talk, begotten of women's fears,
That leaps into the air to die in smoke ?
Can you say aught to clear my mind of doubt ?

LEADER

We heard indeed—but go in to the strangers,
And ask of them. No messenger so sure
As to enquire oneself of him who knows. 850

AIGISTHOS

This messenger I must see and question further,
Whether he was present at the death himself,
Or from some phantom rumour learnt his tale.
Be sure they shall not cheat a clear-eyed mind.

Exit AIGISTHOS into the palace.

CHORUS

Zeus, Zeus, what speech shall I find ? Whence now
Shall begin my fervent prayer to thy Godhead ?
How in loyal zeal
Give utterance due to my longing ?
For now is the hour when either the blood-stained

Edges of cleaving man-slaying sword-blades
Must utterly whelm in destruction the house
Of great Agamemnon for all time ;
Or else he, kindling a fire and a light
For the cause of freedom and lawful rule,
Shall win the great wealth of his fathers.
Such now is the prize for which, one against two,
Our heaven-guided champion Orestes
Must wrestle. Oh yet may he conquer.

860

THE VOICE OF AIGISTHOS, *within the palace.*
Ey! Ey! Otototoi!

CHORUS

Ah! What is it ?
How is it now ? How doth Fate crown the event ?
Stand we aside while the issue is in doubt,
That so we may seem blameless of these woes.
For 'tis by the sword the verdict must be sealed.

870

Enter SERVANT.

SERVANT

Woe is me! Utter woe! My lord is slain.
Woe yet once more, a third last farewell cry!
Aigisthos is no more. But open, open,
And with all speed. Unbar the women's gates.
Draw the bolts. And right lusty hands are needed—
Though not to help the dead—what use were that ?
Ioû! Ioû!

880

I am shouting to the deaf and wasting words
On idle sleepers. Where is Klytaemnestra ?
What doth she ? Her own neck is like to fall
Beside the block beneath the stroke of Justice.

Enter KLYTAEMNESTRA.

KLYTAEMNESTRA

What is it now ? What clamour are you raising ?

SERVANT

The dead, I tell you, are murdering the living.

KLYTAEMNESTRA

Ay me ! I read the purport of your riddle.
Even as by craft we slew, so must we perish.
Haste, someone, give me a man-destroying axe.
Let us know if we are conquerors or conquered. 890
To such a pass this woeful way has brought me.

*Enter ORESTES with his sword drawn, followed by
PYLADES.*

ORESTES

'Tis thee I seek. For him, it is enough.

KLYTAEMNESTRA

Ah me, beloved Aigisthos ! Art thou dead ?

ORESTES

Thou lovest the man ? Why then in the same grave
Shalt thou lie, ne'er to abandon him in death.

KLYTAEMNESTRA

Forbear, my son. Reverence this, dear child,
This breast at which thou oft, slumbering the while,
Didst suck with toothless gums the fostering milk.

ORESTES

Pylades ? Shall I fear to slay my mother ?

PYLADES

Who then will heed henceforth the voice of Loxias, 900
His Pythian oracles, aye and the faith of oaths ?
Rather hold all men enemies than the Gods.

ORESTES

I approve thy sentence. Well dost thou exhort me.
Come now. I mean to slay you at yon man's side.
In his life you deemed him better than my sire ;
Sleep with him then in death ; since he is the man
You love, and him you should have loved, you hate.

KLYTAEMNESTRA

I reared thee, and with thee would I grow old.

ORESTES

My father's murderess, wouldst thou share my home ?

KLYTAEMNESTRA

Nay, child, the blame in part must lie with Fate. 910

ORESTES

Then this doom also Fate has brought to pass.

KLYTAEMNESTRA

Hast thou no awe, child, of a parent's curse ?

ORESTES

A mother's, who could cast me forth to misery.

KLYTAEMNESTRA

To a friendly house ! That was no casting forth.

ORESTES

Foully was I sold, I, son of a free sire.

KLYTAEMNESTRA

Where is the price then I received for thee ?

ORESTES

That taunt for shame I cannot plainly utter.

KLYTAEMNESTRA

Nay, but speak likewise of thy father's follies.

ORESTES

Idling at home, censure not him who toils.

KLYTAEMNESTRA

'Tis grief for a woman, child, to lack a mate. 920

ORESTES

Yet man's labour maintains her in idleness.

KLYTAEMNESTRA

Thou meanest then, my child, to slay thy mother.

ORESTES

'Tis thou wilt be thine own slayer, not I.

KLYTAEMNESTRA

Look to it ! Beware the hounds of a mother's fury.

ORESTES

How escape my father's, if I shirk this task ?

KLYTAEMNESTRA

Words then are vain as a dirge to a dead tomb.

ORESTES

Vain, for my sire's fate brings this doom upon thee.

KLYTAEMNESTRA

Ay me ! This is the snake I bare and suckled.

ORESTES

Yes, a true prophet was that dream-born terror. 929

You slew whom you ought not : suffer what you should not.

Exit ORESTES, driving KLYTAEMNESTRA before him.

PYLADES follows.

LEADER

I mourn, even though it be for these, their twofold doom.
But since sore-tried Orestes hath but reached the crown
Of many murders, we would rather choose it so,
Lest of this house the eye sink quenched for evermore.

CHORUS

As upon Priam's sons punishment came at last, Str. I

Heavily fraught with doom,

So to the royal house of Agamemnon came

A twofold lion, a twofold sword ;

Yea to the utmost end

The Pytho-crowned fugitive, 940

Sped by the voice divine, his race now has run.

Ephymnion I

Utter a cry of joy, now that our master's house

Thus hath escaped its woes, yea and the waste of wealth

By an unclean and guilty pair—

A hard, weary road !

Ant. 1

Now upon him who loved treacherous fight, is come
Cunningly plotted doom.
And in the strife 'twas she guided aright his hand,
The veritable child of Zeus :
Justice the name whereby
She is called by men truthfully : 950
Deadly the wrath she breathes against those she hates.

Ephymnion 1

Utter a cry of joy, now that our master's house
Thus hath escaped its woes, yea and the waste of wealth
By an unclean and guilty pair—
A hard, weary road !

Str. 2

Even as Loxias without guile proclaimed
Out of the cavern vast of his Parnassian shrine,
So on the sin and the guile,
That long here have reigned, Justice hath brought revenge.
A strict fate forbids divine power itself
To serve evil ends.
Révére thén the law whereby Heaven is bound. 960

Ephymnion 2

Kindled is now the light : gone is the mighty curb
Holding the house in thrall.
Up then, arise, ye halls ! Grovelling on the ground
Too long have ye been lying wrapped in drear veils of gloom.

Ant. 2

Verily soon shall Time, he that fulfilleth all,
Pass through the palace doors, when from the hearth he has
purged
Every pollution away,
With due cleansing rites driving the curses forth.
The dice now shall change with fair-falling face,
And, oh joy, the home 970
Shall ónce móre behold its éxíles restored.

Kindled is now the light : gone is the mighty curb
 Holding the house in thrall.
 Up then, arise, ye halls ! Grovelling on the ground
 Too long have ye been lying wrapped in drear veils of gloom.

*The scene opens, and ORESTES is seen standing beside
 the bodies of KLYTÆMNESTRA and AIGISTHOS.*

ORESTES

Behold this twofold tyranny of our land,
 They that slew the father and despoiled the house.
 Stately they were once, seated on their thrones,
 And loving even now, as from their plight
 Is manifest. True to its pledge their oath still stands.
 Both swore my father's murder, and to die
 Together. That too has been faithfully kept.
 Behold too, ye that judge these deeds of woe, 980
 The snare wherewith my unhappy sire was bound,
 For his hands a fetter, for his feet a trap.
 Open it out, and standing round, display
 This man-enwrapping sheet, that so the Father,
 Not mine, but he whose eye sees all things here,
 The Sun, may behold my mother's unclean work,
 And some day at my trial may appear
 To witness that I wrought this slaying justly,
 My mother's—for Aigisthos' death I count not :
 His the seducer's penalty by law :— 990
 But she who planned this horror against her lord,
 Whose children she had borne beneath her girdle,
 That once dear burden, proved now a deadly foe,
 What think you of her ? Were she sea-snake or viper,
 Her touch would rot another's flesh unbitten,
 If cruelty and wicked will could do it.
 What can I name it, speak I ne'er so mildly ?
 A trap for a beast ? or else a coffin-cloth
 To wrap the feet of a corpse ? Nay, 'tis a net :
 Toils you might say, or long foot-trammelling robes ; 1000

Just such a thing some cozener might contrive,
One who tricks travellers, practising the trade
Of robbery. Many with this knavish snare
Might he destroy, and his heart often glow.
With such a woman never may I share
My home. Sooner let heaven slay me, childless.

CHORUS

Ah me! Ah me! 'Twas a wicked deed.
By a terrible death thou art laid low.
Alas!
Woe is flowering too for the living.

ORESTES

Did she the deed, or did she not? I call
This robe to witness, dyed by Aigisthos' sword.
'Tis gushing blood that here hath aided time
In spoiling the embroidery's many hues.
Now can I praise, now wail him where he fell:
And as I address this web that slew my sire,
I grieve for the crime, the penance, the whole race.
Such victory wins not envy, but pollution.

1010

CHORUS

No mortal man may pass through his life
Without scathe, if he pay not in sorrow.
Alas!
Woe must be, to-day or hereafter.

1020

ORESTES

Now hear me, for I know not how it will end—
Yea, like a driver mastered by his steeds,
My restive wits are whirling me astray
Far from the course; while Terror fain would sing
To my heart, and set her dancing to his tune.
So while I am sane, proclaiming to my friends
I say, with justice did I slay my mother,
My sire's foul murderess, abhorred of heaven.
And for the spells that nerved me to this deed,

I cite the Pythian oracle of Loxias, 1030
That should I act thus, I were clear of blame,
But if I failed to act—how name the penalty ?
For ne'er could bow-cast reach such height of woe.
So now behold me : furnished with this bough
Enwreathed with wool, a suppliant will I go
To the mid-navel shrine, the home of Loxias,
And to that fire-light, famed imperishable,
Exiled for kindred bloodshed. To no hearth
Save his did Loxias bid me turn for refuge.
And let all men of Argos in time to come 1040
Bear witness how these woes were brought to pass.
A wandering, homeless fugitive, I leave
Behind me, in life or death, such fame as this.

LEADER

Nay, thou hast done well. Yoke not then thy lips
To ill-omened speech, nor utter boding words,
Since the whole realm of Argos thou hast freed,
Thus lightly lopping the heads from those two snakes.

ORESTES

Ah ! Ah !
Bondwomen, see them yonder, Gorgon-like,
In dusky raiment, twined about with coils
Of swarming snakes ! I cannot stay here more. 1050

LEADER

What fantasies toss thee, dearest of all sons
To a father ? Stay : fear nothing. Thou hast vanquished.

ORESTES

To me these horrors are no fantasies,
But indeed the sleuth-hounds of my mother's wrath.

LEADER

Because the blood is yet fresh on thy hands.
Hence the confusion that invades thy soul.

ORESTES

Sovereign Apollo, yonder they come now thronging !
And from their eyes is dripping a loathsome gore.

LEADER

One only purge awaits thee : Loxias
Shall free thee from these horrors by his touch. 1060

ORESTES

Ye do not see these beings, but I see them.
I am hunted by them. I can stay no more.

LEADER

Blessings go with thee, and may gracious Gods
Watch over and keep thee safe with happy chance.

Exit ORESTES.

CHORUS

Thus again for a third time, risen from the race,
Hath a storm swept over
The house of our kings and subsided.
First was the cruel doom of the children
Slain at the banquet.
Next was the anguish of a man, of a king, 1070
When the Achaians' warrior chieftain
In the bath fell slain.
Now comes yet a third, a deliverer, nay,
Rather destroyer.
What end shall there be ? When shall the fury
Of revenge sink lulled into slumber ?

THE EUMENIDES, OR THE KINDLY
GODDESSES

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

THE PYTHIAN PROPHETESS.

ORESTES.

APOLLO.

HERMES.

GHOST OF KLYTAEMNESTRA.

ATHENA.

CHORUS OF TWELVE FURIES.

ATHENIAN JURORS.

CHORUS OF THE ESCORT.

THE EUMENIDES

*Before the temple of Apollo at Delphi. Enter the Pythian
PROPHETESS.*

THE PROPHETESS

First of all Gods I worship in my prayer
The first diviner Earth ; after her Themis,
The second, legend saith, to take her seat
Here in her mother's shrine. Third in succession,
With her consent, no violence done to any,
Another Titan child of Earth took seat,
Phoibe : who as a birthday gift bestowed it
On Phoibos, bearing a name from her derived.
He, voyaging from the pool and ridge of Delos,
And landing upon Pallas' harbouring shores, 10
Came to this country, his Parnassian seat,
Escorted with great worship on his way
By the road-paving children of Hephaistus,
Who tamed the wilderness of an untamed land.
There did the people and their governor,
King Delphos, with high honour welcome him.
His mind with divine art did Zeus inspire,
And seated him, fourth prophet, on this throne,
As Loxias, spokesman of his father Zeus.
These Gods I worship in my opening prayer. 20
Pallas our neighbour too I name with reverence.
I adore the Nymphs who haunt the caverned rock
Korūkis, loved by birds, by Gods frequented.
And Bromios,¹ I forget not, dwells here too,

¹ Bacchus.

Since, marshalling as a God his Bacchant host,
A torn hare's death for Pentheus he contrived.
The springs of Pleistos and Poseidon's might
I invoke, and Zeus supreme, the crown of all,
Then seat myself as prophetess on my throne.
May they now bless my entrance more than ever 30
In past days. Let all Hellenes present here
Approach, as custom bids, by fall of lot.
As the God leads me, so do I give response.

The PROPHETESS enters the shrine, but quickly returns.

Things terrible to speak, terrible to see,
Have driven me forth again from Loxias' house,
With no strength left me even to walk erect.
I speed with hands to steady tottering feet.
An aged woman scared is naught—a mere child.
When I drew near the wreath-decked inmost cell,
Upon the navel-stone I saw a man 40
Polluted, in a suppliant attitude.
With blood his hands were dripping, and he held
A drawn sword and a high-grown branch of olive,
Decently wreathed around with a broad fillet
Of white wool: that I can avouch with truth.
Between me and this man a fearful troop
Of women slumbered, seated upon chairs.
Yet not women: Gorgons call them rather.
Nor yet to Gorgon shapes do I liken them.
Such fiends I once saw pictured, snatching away 50
The banquet of Phineus. Yet of wingless form
Are these, dusky and loathsome altogether.
They snore with such blasts none may venture near;
And from their eyes a foul rheum oozes forth.
Their garb is neither fit to approach the statues
Of deities, nor to enter homes of men.
The race whence this tribe sprang ne'er have I seen,
Nor know what land may boast to have reared such off-
spring

Unharm'd, without repenting her travail.
For what may ensue, let mightiest Loxias, 60
Who is master of this house, himself provide.
He is healing seer and judge of prodigies,
And can purge houses other than his own.

Exit PROPHETESS. *The interior of the shrine is disclosed.* ORESTES *is seen kneeling and clasping the navel-stone for sanctuary, surrounded by the sleeping* FURIES. APOLLO *and HERMES are standing over him.*

APOLLO

I shall not fail. To the end will I protect thee.
Near shall I be, even though far away :
Nor will I prove soft to thy enemies.
Awhile thou seest yon raveners subdued.
Lo, sunken in sleep the loathly virgins lie,
These hoary ancient maidens, with whom never
Hath any God mingled, nor man, nor beast. 70
Evil was cause of their creation ; evil
The murky pit of Tartarus where they dwell
Abhorred by men and by the Olympian Gods.
Yet do not thou grow faint, but fly far hence :
For they will chase thee across the long mainland,
Ever new soil beneath thy wandering tread,
And beyond seas and past wave-girded towns.
Let not thy heart faint brooding on thy penance,
Till thou take refuge in the city of Pallas
And clasp her ancient image in thy arms. 80
There before judges of thy cause, with speech
Of soothing power, we will discover means
To set thee free forever from these woes.
For I did counsel thee to slay thy mother.

ORESTES

Sovereign Apollo, what is just thou knowest :
Now therefore study to neglect it not.
Thy power to succour needs no warrant.

APOLLO

Remember : let not fear subdue thy soul.
And thou, born of one father, my own brother,
Hermes, protect him : prove thy title true 90
As Guide, by shepherding my suppliant here.
The sanctity of an outlaw Zeus respects,
When thus with prosperous escort he is sped.

*APOLLO vanishes. ORESTES leaves the temple, guided
by HERMES. The GHOST OF KLYTAEMNESTRA
appears.*

GHOST OF KLYTAEMNESTRA

Sleep, would you ? Shame ! What need of sleepers here ?
And I by you thus held in slight regard
Among the other dead, and followed still
By the reproach of murder among the shades,
Wandering shamed—to you do I declare,
By them I am most grievously accused.
Yet wronged so foully by my nearest kin, 100
No spirit power shows wrath on my behalf,
Though slaughtered by the hands of a matricide.
Look now upon these wounds ; look with thy soul.
For while it sleeps, the mind is lit with eyes ;
But by day mortal fate is not foreseen.
Oft indeed of my offerings have you lapped :
Wineless libations, sober soothing draughts,
Dread midnight banquets, when no God but you
Is worshipped, on the altar would I sacrifice.
All this, I see, is spurned beneath your feet. 110
The man is gone, escaping like a fawn,
Aye, from the very snare's midst has he sprung
Lightly, making great mouths at you in scorn.
Hear me. 'Tis for my very soul I plead.
Awake, O Goddesses of the nether world.
In dream now do I, Klytaemnestra, call you.

CHORUS

(Mutterings.)

KLYTAEMNESTRA

Yes, whimper ! But the man is gone, fled far :
For he has friends far different from mine.

CHORUS

(Mutterings.)

120

KLYTAEMNESTRA

Too deep you drowse, and pity not my wrong.
Fled is Orestes, who slew me, his mother.

CHORUS

(Moanings.)

KLYTAEMNESTRA

Whining and drowsing ! Come, rise up forthwith.
What hast thou yet done save to work me harm ?

CHORUS

(Moanings.)

KLYTAEMNESTRA

Sleep and fatigue, puissant conspirators,
Have spoiled the dreadful dragoness of her might.

CHORUS

(Mutterings redoubled and louder.)

Follow, follow, follow, follow ! Mark there !

130

KLYTAEMNESTRA

In dream you hunt your prey, and give tongue like
A hound, whose fancy never quits the chase.
What dost thou ? Arise ! Let not fatigue defeat thee.
Made soft by sleep, lose not all sense of injury.
Let thy heart wince at merited rebuke,
Which to the righteous is a very goad.
Waft thou thy blood-hot breath upon the man :
Shrivel him with thy belly's fiery blast.
Follow him ; wither him with a fresh pursuit.

The GHOST OF KLYTAEMNESTRA disappears.

LEADER

Awake!—Do thou wake *her*—while I wake *thee*. 140
Dost thou sleep? Rise; and spurning sleep afar,
Let us see if this warning dream prove false.

CHORUS (*outbursts by separate FURIES.*) Str. 1
Behold! Behold! Oh shame! See, we have suffered wrong!
Much painful toil have I endured, and all in vain.—
Bitter indeed the wrong done to us. Oh the shame!
Defeat hard to bear!—
Our game has slipped right through the meshes, and is gone.
By sleep subdued, lo! I have lost, lost the prey.—

APOLLO *reappears.*

Aha, son of Zeus! Thou art a thief, a knave. Ant. 1
Thy youth rides trampling over elder deities. 150
What is thy suppliant? What but a godless man,
A cruel son? Yet him,
This matricide, thou hast stolen from us, thou, a God.
Who dares pretend—none!—that such deeds are just?

Str. 2

But unto me, a dream-heard voice, there came Reproach,
That struck, (like a charioteer who smites
Gripping his mid-goad firm,)
Struck under the ribs to the heart.
I feel it now: sore the smart
Which the fell scourge has wrought. 160
Oh agony, agony not to be borne!

Ant. 2

Such are the doings of those younger Gods, who grasp
Beyond right the lordship over all.
Dripping from head to foot
With blood you may see it, the throne
That is the Earth's navel-stone.
Lo the foul stain of gore
That clings to it horribly thus evermore!

A prophet deity, he hath brought pollution home Str. 3
To his own holy shrine, self-bidden, self-invited. 170

Heavenly law he spurns, honouring human crime ;
And elder dooms of Fate he destroys.

Ant. 3

He hath my hate ; nor shall he set yon murderer loose.
Though beneath earth he flee, ne'er shall he win deliverance.
Never from guilt absolved, still an avenger there
To haunt his head accurst he shall find.

APOLLO

Out, I command you, from these precincts ! Hence
With speed ! Begone from my prophetic shrine ; 180
Lest smitten by a wingèd glistening snake
Sped from my gold-wrought bow-string, thou in anguish
Shouldst spit forth foam darkened with human blood,
Vomiting clots of gore which thou hast sucked.
This is no dwelling fit for your approach.
Go rather where doomed heads are lopped, eyes gouged,
Throats cut ; where by destruction of the seed
The virile strength of boys is maimed, where men
Are sliced or stoned, or wail in long-drawn moans
Impaled beneath the spine. Do you not hear me ? 190
Such is the feast that charms you, and so makes
The Gods abhor you. Your whole form and fashion
Betrays you. In some blood-gorged lion's cave
Such as *you* should inhabit, not in this place
Of prophecy, infecting all you touch.
Vile flock without a shepherd, get you hence !
For such a herd no God has love to give.

LEADER

Sovereign Apollo, hear now our reply.
Thou thyself art not guilty of this in part :
Thou alone didst all ; the whole guilt is thine. 200

APOLLO

How ? Make that clear. I grant thee speech so far.

LEADER

Thy voice enjoined this man to slay his mother.

APOLLO

I enjoined him to avenge his sire. What then ?

LEADER

And next didst promise shelter to blood new-spilt.

APOLLO

And bade him seek purgation in this temple.

LEADER

Us then, who sped him hither, dost thou revile ?

APOLLO

Because you are not fit to approach this house.

LEADER

But thus to act is our appointed office. . . .

APOLLO

What is this office, this proud privilege ?

LEADER

We hunt forth mother-slayers from all homes. 210

APOLLO

How deal you then with wives who slay their lords ?

LEADER

That were no true murder of kindred blood.

APOLLO

Then of slight honour and no worth you make
The troth-plight between Zeus and crowning Hera.
By this plea too you cast into contempt
Love's Goddess, from whom come man's dearest joys.
The fate-sealed marriage bed of man and wife,
Fenced with its rights, is mightier than all oaths.
If then to those who slay their mates you are lenient,
So as not even to cast them a look of wrath, 220
I say without right you pursue Orestes.
For while your passion in one case is roused,
In another I perceive you judge more calmly.
But Pallas at this trial shall arbitrate.

LEADER

Yonder man never, never will I let go.

APOLLO

Pursue him then and multiply thy toil.

LEADER

Seek not to abridge my rights by argument.

APOLLO

I would not take them as a gift, thy rights.

LEADER

Where Zeus sits throned thou art great enough already.

But I, drawn by a mother's blood, pursue 230

This man with vengeance, till I hunt him down.

APOLLO

And I will aid my suppliant and protect him.

For dreaded among men and gods alike

Is the appealer's wrath, should I forsake him.

The scene changes to the temple of ATHENA at ATHENS.

*Enter ORESTES, who takes sanctuary at the
image of the GODDESS.*

ORESTES

Goddess Athena, by command of Loxias

I come. Receive this outcast graciously,

No suppliant unabsolved with hand unpurged ;

Long since the stain is dimmed and worn away

By sojournings and journeyings among men.

Wandering over land and sea alike,

Obedient still to Loxias' oracles

I approach thy dwelling and thine image, Goddess.

Here clinging, will I wait my trial's end.

Enter the FURIES.

LEADER

Good !—Here is a clear trace of the man.

Come, follow where the dumb informer guides.

For as a hound pursues a wounded fawn,
 So by the dropping blood we track him down.
 Broken by many killing toils my breast
 Pants ; for through every land my search has ranged,
 And speeding over seas with wingless flight 250
 Have I pursued, swift as a ship can sail.
 But now he must be cowering somewhere near.
 The smell of human blood smiles sweetly upon me.

CHORUS (*outbursts by separate FURIES.*)

Again, search again !
 Spy into every nook,
 For fear the matricide
 Stealthily slip from our wrath.—
 Yes, there again safe he lurks,
 Clinging around the image of the deathless God :
 Trial he now would claim for his foul handiwork.— 260
 But it may not be : a mother's blood, once spilt, is hard
 To gather up ; hard indeed.
 That which on earth is shed, vanishes and is gone.—
 Now thou in turn must yield me from thy living self,
 Ruddy and rich from the heart, liquor to lap : and on thee
 I mean to thrive well, evil draught though it be.—
 I'll wither thee alive and drag thee down below,
 There to atone, pang for pang, thy mother's agony.—
 There shalt thou see all impious mortals else who sinned
 Be it against a God, 270
 Be it against guest,
 Or dear parent's life,
 Receiving each the penance that is justly theirs.
 For Hades there, the mighty doomster of mankind,
 Beneath earth enthroned,
 Watcheth and judgeth all with mind truth-inscribed.

ORESTES

Schooled by my miseries, I have experience
 In purifying rites. Where speech befits
 I know, where silence too. But in this case

A wise instructor charges me to speak. 280
 For the blood sleeps and is fading from my hand :
 The stain of matricide is washed away.
 While yet fresh, at divine Apollo's hearth
 It was expelled by purging blood of swine.
 A long tale were it to recount all those
 I have visited with harmless intercourse.
 Now with pure lips, religiously, I call
 On this land's Queen, Athena, that she come
 Hither to aid me, and so without strife win
 Myself, my country and the Argive people 290
 As true allies, faithful for evermore.
 So whether in some Libyan region now,
 Beside her natal river Triton's stream,
 She plant an upright or a covered foot,
 Succouring her friends, or else, like marshal bold
 And manly, she be watching Phlegra's plain,
 Oh let her haste—a God hears even from far—
 And bring to me deliverance from these woes.

LEADER

Ne'er shall Apollo nor Athena's might
 Protect thee, but abandoned shalt thou perish, 300
 Finding no place for gladness in thy soul.
 Thou bloodless meat of spirits, thou mere shadow,
 Wilt thou not answer, wilt thou scorn my words,
 Though for me thou art bred and consecrated ?
 Alive, slain at no altar, shalt thou feed me.
 Now shalt thou hear a hymn to bind thee fast.

CHORUS

Come now, our choric dance form we, for now
 'Tis time to reveal
 The destroying charm of our music,
 Expounding the functions of this our band 310
 To administer destiny among men.
 Righteous and just we deem is our justice.
 That man who displays hands pure without stain,

Ne'er do we launch our anger against him :
Unscathed his days he fulfilleth.
But when having sinned, like unto this man,
He hides from us hands that are guilt-stained,
Then for the slain true witnesses are we,
And in wrath we arise, stern, unappeasable,
To exact a revenge for the blood spilt.

320

Mother who didst bear me (O Mother
Night) to be judge of those who see and who see not,
Hear : for he, Leto's whelp, from my rights fain would oust
me,

Str. 1

Stealing yon cowering
Creature, mine though he be,
Sealed thus by a mother's blood.

Over his death-dedicate head
Sing we the spell, madding the brain,
Scattering sense and bewildering,
Our Erīnuan litany,
Binding fast the will, a chant
Lyreless, withering men away.

Ephymnion 1

330

This the eternal function which changeless
Fate as she span decreed should be our own : all men,
Whoso incurs wantonly guilt of foul kindred bloodshed,
Such we haunt, till beneath
Earth he pass. Nay, in death
He shall still be none too free.

Ant. 1

340

Over his death-dedicate head
Sing we the spell, madding the brain,
Scattering sense and bewildering,
Our Erīnuan litany,
Binding fast the will, a chant
Lyreless, withering men away.

Ephymnion 1

Str. 2

Such, when we rose into being, the functions assigned us.
Let no Immortal encroach on our rights ; for of them there is
None shall share in our banquets.

351

We claim an office dishonoured and scorned
By Gods above. A sunless murk
Divideth them and us,
Shadowy, pathless and rugged, alike
For seeing and for sightless eyes.

What mortal then quaiileth not
In awe and dread, when he hears
Our ordinance, stablished
By Fate, and by the Gods assigned
In perpetuity ? Yea from of old
This privilege hath been ours. No lack
Of honour do we meet,
Though beneath earth is our dwelling appointed,
And in sun-forsaken gloom.

Ant. 4
390

Enter ATHENA.

ATHENA

I heard a suppliant cry from far away,
Where by Skamander's stream I was occupying
A land which the Achaian chiefs assigned
In full possession and entire to me
A mighty portion of their spear-won wealth,
A chosen gift unto the sons of Theseus.
Thence came I speeding with unwearied foot,
To the wingless rustling of my bellying aegis :
This was the car my lusty steeds were yoked to.
Beholding these strange visitants in my land,
The sight dismays me not, though it astounds.
Who are you ? I would question all alike,
Both him who sits a suppliant at my image,
And you, so unlike aught begotten of seed,
Seen never among Goddesses by Gods,
Nor yet resembling shapes of mortal men.
Yet to speak ill of others unprovoked
The just like not, and righteousness abhors.

400

410

LEADER

Thou shalt hear all in brief, daughter of Zeus.

We are Night's eternal children. In our homes
Below the earth, the Curses are we called.

ATHENA

Your birth I know now, and the name you bear.

LEADER

Aye, and my office thou shalt learn forthwith.

ATHENA

I shall understand you, if your words are plainer. 420

LEADER

Slayers of men we hunt forth from all homes.

ATHENA

And the slayer's flight—where is the end of it ?

LEADER

Where happiness is no more to be found.

ATHENA

Is the flight such whereon you hound this man ?

LEADER

Yes, for he dared to be his mother's murderer.

ATHENA

Was there no other power, whose wrath he feared ?

LEADER

What goad so strong as to compel matricide ?

ATHENA

There are two parties here, and but one plea.

LEADER

But the oath, he will not take nor tender it.

ATHENA

Thou wouldst be called just rather than act justly. 430

LEADER

How so ? Explain. Thou art not poor in subtlety.

ATHENA

I say that wrong must not prevail by oaths.

LEADER

Well, question him, then judge with equity.

ATHENA

Will you entrust the cause to my decision ?

LEADER

How else ? Thy noble fame and birth we reverence.

ATHENA

What reply, stranger, wouldst thou make to this ?

But tell me first thy country and thy lineage,

And thy misfortunes, then repel this charge ;

If in truth with right assured thou sittest here

Clasping this holy image near my altar,

A sacred suppliant like Ixion¹ once.

440

To all these questions give me a plain reply.

ORESTES

Sovereign Athena, first of a grave scruple,

Answering thy last words, will I relieve thee.

I seek no absolution, nor with hand

Polluted to thine image do I cling.

And of this, weighty proof shall I allege.

By law the slayer is debarred from speech,

Till one who has power to purify from murder

Sprinkle him with a suckling victim's blood.

450

Long ago have I thus been duly purged

Elsewhere, with victim and with lustral stream.

With these words do I set at rest thy doubt.

Hear now my race. In Argos was I born.

My sire, to whom thy question fitly leads,

Was Agamemnon, chieftain of warrior seamen,

With whose aid thou didst make the city of Troy

¹ Fabled to be the first murderer of a kinsman, but purified from blood-guilt by the Gods.

No more a city. He returning home
 Died shamefully, by my black-souled mother slain,
 Enveloped in a cunning snare, that still 460
 Remained as witness of that murderous bath.
 And I, till then an exile, coming home
 Slew her who bare me, I deny it not,
 Requiring thus my beloved father's blood.
 And for this deed must Loxias share the guilt,
 Since he, to goad my heart, foretold dire pains
 If I dealt not with those who first were guilty.
 Whether I did right or no, be thou the judge.
 Whate'er my fate, from thee will I accept it.

ATHENA

The matter is too grave for any mortal 470
 To presume to try it : nor may I myself
 Lawfully judge a case of passionate murder.
 Moreover to my house thou art come a humbled
 Suppliant, pure and innocent, whom, as one
 Guiltless towards my people, I respect.
 But these are hard to soften and placate ;
 And if they win not victory in this cause,
 The poison of their pride, rained on the soil,
 Will prove a fearful devastating blight.
 Thus is it, both ways—whether I bid them stay 480
 Or go—a sore perplexity for me.
 But since this case has lighted on our city,
 I will appoint judges of murder, bound
 By oath, to be an ordinance for all time.
 You are to summon hither witnesses
 And proof, the sworn supports of a just plea.
 When I have chosen the best among my citizens,
 I will return to sift this matter truly.

Exeunt ATHENA and ORESTES.

CHORUS

Now shall ancient law by new Str. 1
 Be destroyed, if perchance 491

Yonder mother-murderer's
Wrongful plea here prevail.
All men now
Shall be taught by such a crime
How 'tis easy and safe to sin.
Yea, and many a time hereafter,
Cruelly stricken by his own
Children, shall a parent fall.

Stern and jealous once we watched
Human sin : now no more
Shall we visit them with wrath.
Death at large will we launch.
Men shall ask
One another, (while they sigh
O'er a neighbour's evil fate,)
How to minish or end their miseries.
Remedy there is none, alas !
Every counsel is in vain.

Ant. 1
500

Nor let him on whom the stroke
Of calamity shall fall,
Thus invoke us, wailing loud :
" Justice, hear !
Hear, ye throned Erīnues ! "
Such perchance the piteous plaint
Of some father or mother's soul,
Anguish-smitten, since o'erthrown
Is the house of Justice now.

Str. 2
510

There are times when Fear is well.
As the heart's inquisitor
Ever must it bide enthroned.
Suffering oft
Teacheth wisdom best to men.
Yet who never in the light
Freely recreates his soul,

Ant. 2
520

Who once defied fate, but by disaster now
Is broken, helpless to override the whelming wave.
With his once proud wealth he sinks for ever,
Dashed on the reef of Justice, lost,
Vanishing unlamented.

*The scene changes to the AREOPAGUS. Enter ATHENA
with twelve Athenian citizens, as jurors, followed
by ORESTES and the CHORUS.*

ATHENA

Proclaim now, Herald : bid the folk be still.
And let the Tyrrhene trumpet, with shrill note
Piercing the heavens, filled with breath of man,
Utter its high-pitched message to the throng.

A trumpet sounds.

Let there be silence while this place of council
Is filling, that my ordinance may be heard
By this whole city for all time to come,
And by these, that the suit be rightly judged.

570

Enter APOLLO.

LEADER

Sovereign Apollo, rule what is thine own.
How in this business, pray, art thou concerned ?

APOLLO

I come, first to give witness,—for *my* house,
My hearth received this man as suppliant,
And it was I who purged him of this murder,—
To plead too for myself, for I was cause
Of his mother's slaying. Open thou the case
In such form as thy wisdom may think best.

580

ATHENA

The word is now with you. The case is opened.
Let the pursuer, as is right, speak first,
And so lay information of the cause.

LEADER

Many we are, but briefly will we speak.
Sentence for sentence do thou make reply.
Say first, art thou thy mother's murderer ?

ORESTES

I slew her. That fact there is no denying.

LEADER

Of the three falls already here is one.

ORESTES

You make that boast too soon : I am not yet thrown. 590

LEADER

But how it was you slew her, you must say.

ORESTES

I will. With a sword I stabbed her in the throat.

LEADER

And who suggested, who advised the deed ?

ORESTES

The oracle of this God. He bears me witness.

LEADER

Did he, the seer, prompt you to matricide ?

ORESTES

Yes : nor do I blame him for my lot so far.

LEADER

If sentence grips thee, soon thou'lt change thy tune.

ORESTES

I trust : my father sends help from the grave.

LEADER

In the dead then put thy trust, thou mother-slayer.

ORESTES

She was attainted by a twofold guilt.

600

LEADER

How so ? Explain thy meaning to these jurors.

ORESTES

She slew my father when she slew her husband.

LEADER

So *she* is quit by death, while *you* still live.

ORESTES

Why did you not pursue her while she lived ?

LEADER

She was not of one blood with the man she slew.

ORESTES

Am I then kindred to my mother's blood ?

LEADER

How else beneath her girdle did she breed thee,
Wretch ? Thine own mother's blood dost thou disdain ?

ORESTES

Apollo, be thou witness now : pronounce
Whether it was with justice that I slew her.
For that I did the deed I have confessed.
But whether justly or no this blood was shed,
Declare thy thought, that I may answer these.

610

APOLLO

To you, the High Court of Athena, honest
Shall be my words. A prophet may not lie.
Never from mantic throne have I said aught,
Whether concerning man, woman, or people,
Save by command of Zeus, the Olympian Father.
What force is in this plea, I bid you note,
And be obedient to my Father's will :
For an oath has no more potency than Zeus.

620

LEADER

So Zeus gave thee this oracle, that bade
This Orestes to avenge his father's blood
Regardless of a mother's claim to awe ?

APOLLO

Nay, it was far worse shame that a noble man,
Endowed with god-given royalty, should die,
And that by a woman's hand, not slain by shafts
As from some Amazon's fierce far-shooting bow,
But in such wise as you are now to hear,
Pallas, and ye whose votes decide this case. 630
Returning from the war, where in the main
He had traded prosperously, with kindly words
She greeted him ; then, as he reached the end
Of his ablutions in the bath, she flung
The tented cloak, and trapped in the cunning robe's
Inextricable maze, smote down her lord.
Such is the tale of how that hero died,
The all-reverenced, the admiral of the fleet.
Such too have I shown *her* to prick your hearts,
All ye whose charge it is to judge this plea.

LEADER

So a father's fate, you say, wins more respect 640
From Zeus, who himself enchained his old sire Kronos.
How reconcile thine argument with this ?
You judges, I invite you to take note.

APOLLO

O loathly, brutish monsters, heaven-abhorred !
Fetters he might undo : there is cure for that ;
Yea many the means to loosen what is bound.
But when the dust hath swallowed a man's blood,
Once dead, there is no raising of him then.
No healing charm hath Zeus my father made
For that : all else now high now low he shifts 650
And turns about with no least breath of toil.

LEADER

See what it means, thy plea in his defence.
His mother's kindred blood he spilt on the earth.
Shall his father's house in Argos yet be his ?

What altar of public worship shall he use ?
What brotherhood will admit him to its rites ?

APOLLO

This too will I expound ; and mark how justly.
The mother of her so-called child is not
Parent, but nurse of the young life sown in her.
The male is parent : she, but a stranger to him,
Keeps safe his growing plant, unless fate blight it.
Of this truth I will show you evidence.

660

A sire may beget without a mother. Here
My witness stands, child of Olympian Zeus,
Who grew not in the darkness of a womb,
Yet plant so fair no goddess could bring forth.
As in all else, Pallas, it shall be my aim
To make thy city and people great, so now
I sent this man as suppliant to thy house,
For all time to become thy faithful friend.
So mayst thou, Goddess, find allies in him
And his hereafter ; while eternally
This people shall maintain their stablished bond.

670

ATHENA

Has enough now been said ; and may I bid
These judges give their true and honest vote ?

LEADER

For our part, all our shafts have now been shot.
I wait to hear how the issue shall be judged.

ATHENA

And you ? Are you content I order so ?

APOLLO

You have heard what you have heard. Friends, give your
votes ;

And let your hearts pay reverence to your oath.

680

ATHENA

Hear now my ordinance, people of Athens,
Judges of the first trial for shed blood.

Here for all time to come shall Aigeus' folk
 Meet as a jurors' council on this hill
 Of Ares,¹ where the Amazons pitched their tents,
 When once to humble Theseus' might they came
 Hither in their hosts, and here raised up a new
 Lofty-towered citadel to rival his,
 Sacrificing to Ares on this rock,
 Thence called the Hill of Ares. Thereon Reverence 690
 And Fear, its kinsman, among my citizens
 Shall check wrong-doing night and day alike,
 So but my citizens alter not the laws.
 If with foul miry influx thou pollute
 Bright water, thou wilt never win a draught.
 Neither ungoverned nor tyrannical,
 Such rule I bid you venerate and maintain.
 Nor wholly from the city banish dread ;
 For what mortal is righteous who fears naught ?
 Such be your reverence and your righteous awe, 700
 And you shall have, to guard your land and town,
 A bulwark such as none elsewhere possess,
 Not 'mid the Scythians, nor in Pelops' isle.
 Pure from corruption, reverend, quick to wrath,
 Such the tribunal I establish here,
 A vigilant guardian of the land's repose.
 To exhort my citizens for times to come,
 At such length have I spoken. Now let each rise
 And take his ballot, and decide the cause
 With reverence for his oath. My words are ended. 710

FURY 1

Dangerous visitants are we to your land.
 Do not affront us then, I counsel you.

APOLLO

And I say, dread my oracles, wherein
 Zeus also speaks his will. Foil not their fruit.

¹ The Areopagus.

FURY 2

Maintain not a bloody cause : 'tis not thine office.
No longer pure will be thy shrines and oracles.

APOLLO

Is my sire no more wise, because he purged
Suppliant Ixion, that first murderer ?

FURY 3

You talk ! But I, if I gain not my cause,
Will soon revisit and chastise this land.

720

APOLLO

Among the young Gods and the elder too
You are despised. The victory shall be mine.

FURY 4

Such a part did you play in Pheres' house,
When you beguiled the Fates to make men deathless.¹

APOLLO

Is it not just to befriend a worshipper,
And more than ever when his need is sore ?

FURY 5

Thou, thou, abolishing ancient ordinance,
Didst cozen those primaeval powers with wine.

APOLLO

Thou, thou, defeated in thy suit, shalt soon
Spit forth thy venom vainly on thy foes.

730

LEADER

Since thy young violence overrides our age,
I wait to hear the verdict, still in doubt
Whether to wreak my wrath against the town.

ATHENA

Mine shall this task be, to give judgment last ;
And this my vote to Orestes will I reckon.
For of no mother was I born : in all,

¹ Persuading them to accept a substitute for Admetus the son of Pheres.

Save to be wedded, with whole heart I approve
The male. I am strongly of the father's side.
Therefore a wife's fate shall I less esteem,
Who slew her husband, the master of her house. 740
Orestes wins, even with equal votes.
Forthwith turn out the ballots from the urns,
You judges to whom that function is assigned.

ORESTES

O bright Apollo, how will the judgment go ?

LEADER

O Night, dark Mother, dost thou behold these things ?

ORESTES

For me 'tis now the noose, or life's light still.

LEADER

For us, ruin, or worship without end.

APOLLO

Number aright the votes cast out, my friends.
As you divide them, reverence honesty.
If a vote fail, great mischief may ensue ; 750
And a single pebble's cast lifts up a house.

ATHENA

This man is acquitted of blood-guiltiness ;
For equal is the number of the lots.

ORESTES

O Pallas ! O thou saviour of my house !
Yea, thus to my lost fatherland hast thou
Restored me : and through Hellas men shall say,
" He is again an Argive, and may dwell
In his sire's heritage, by help of Pallas,
And Loxias, last of Him who ordaineth all,
The Saviour." Pitying my sire's fate, he looked 760
On these, my mother's advocates, and saved me.
I now unto this land and to thy folk,

Ere to my home I go, will swear this oath
 That shall be valid for all time to come :
 Never let Argive captain hither march
 With spears in order ranked to do you wrong.
 For we ourselves, from the grave where we shall lie,
 Will plague those who transgress these oaths of ours
 With desperate misadventures, till beset
 By evil omens as they march, their hearts
 Fail them, and they repent their enterprise.
 But while there is no default, while still they honour
 This city of Pallas with confederate spear,
 Towards them the greater will be our good-will.
 Farewell. May thou and this thy city's people
 Grapple your foes in a resistless grip,
 Till safety and victorious arms be yours.

770

Exeunt ORESTES and APOLLO.

CHORUS

Oh shame, ye younger Deities ! The old, holy laws Str. 1
 Ye have ridden down, and stolen from our hands the prey.
 But I, dishonoured, grief-afflicted, heavily wroth, 780
 On this land accurst
 Poison, poison, woe for woe, drops of sterile influence
 Will I drip down to earth, hot from my heart ; and thence
 Birth-killing blight, bud-withering, (Oh revenge !)
 Scattering over the ground,
 Shall sow the soil with man-destroying blots of plague.
 Oh wail ! wail !—How act now ?
 I am mocked, mocked.—A sore grief
 To Athens be my wrongs !
 Alas, heavy the wrongs
 We bear, Maids of Night,
 Mourning our loss of honour.

790

ATHENA

I pray you, do not grieve thus bitterly.
 You are not vanquished ; but in equal votes
 The cause ends, fairly, not to your dishonour.

No, but from Zeus came shining testimony,
 Given by the very God who gave the oracle,
 That Orestes by this deed should take no harm.
 Then be not passionate ; hurl no wrathful threats 800
 Against this land, nor cause sterility
 By shedding venomous drops of magic dew,
 With fierce corrosion to devour the seed.
 For here I promise you most faithfully
 A cavern for your shrine in sacred ground,
 Where on bright altars you shall sit enthroned,
 Adored and worshipped by my citizens.

CHORUS

Oh shame, ye younger Deities ! The old, holy laws Ant. 1
 Ye have ridden down, and stolen from our hands the prey.
 But I, dishonoured, grief-afflicted, heavily wroth, 810
 On this land accurst
 Poison, poison, woe for woe, drops of sterile influence
 Will I drip down to earth, hot from my heart ; and thence
 Birth-killing blight, bud-withering, (Oh revenge !)
 Scattering over the ground,
 Shall sow the soil with man-destroying blots of plague.
 Oh wail ! wail !—How act now ?
 I am mocked, mocked.—A sore grief
 To Athens be my wrongs ! 820
 Alas, heavy the wrongs
 We bear, Maids of Night,
 Mourning our loss of honour.

ATHENA

Ye are *not* dishonoured : then restrain your wrath.
 Being Gods, plague not with spells a land of mortals.
 I put my trust in Zeus : what need to say it ?
 Alone of Gods I know the keys that open
 The chamber where the thunder is sealed up.
 But of that there is no need. Be counselled by me :
 Sow not the earth with fruit of a wild tongue, 830
 Fraught with the seeds of ruin for all life.

Calm the black billowing wave's fierce violence :
Become the revered partner of my home.
When the prime offerings of this spacious land
For offspring and for marriage rite, are thine
For ever, thou wilt yet commend this offer.

CHORUS

We to endure such a shame ! Str. 2
We the primaevally wise ! thus domiciled, thus housed !
Dishonouring, shameful thought !
I bréathe fórch my rage, my soul's passionate wrath. 840
Oh ! Oh ! Shame ! Foul !
What is this agony—this, that assails my breast ?
Hear my fury, O Mother
Night : for the Gods have robbed me, by vile, crafty tricks,
Stolen my ancient honours, bróught lów my pride.

ATHENA

I will indulge thy moods, for thou art elder.
And yet, though thou art wiser far than I,
To me too Zeus hath given no foolish wit. 850
But if you pass to a land of other folk,
You will regret our Athens, I forewarn you.
For to her citizens time's stream shall flow
With larger honour ; whilst thou, honourably
Enshrined by Erechtheus' temple,¹ shalt receive
From adoring troops of men and women, more
Than thou couldst hope in the wide world besides.
And thou within my bounds must never plant
Whetstones of bloodshed, such as mar the breast
Of youth, maddening with worse rage than wine ; 860
Nor take, to graft it in my citizens,
The heart of fighting cocks, a spirit of war
Domestic, valiant only against kin.
Let them seek war abroad, not hard to find
For men swayed by a mighty lust for glory.
Farm-yard fowls and their battles I despise.

¹ The shrine of an ancient mythical king.

Such then the choice that now I offer thee :
Blessing, and blest, and worshipped blessedly,
To share in this most heaven-favoured land. 869

CHORUS

We to endure such a shame ! Ant. 2
We the primaevally wise ! thus domiciled, thus housed !
Dishonouring, shameful thought !
I bréathe forth my rage, my soul's passionate wrath.
Oh ! Oh ! Shame ! Foul !
What is this agony—this, that assails my breast ?
Hear my fury, O Mother
Night : for the Gods have robbed me, by vile, crafty tricks,
Stolen my ancient honours, bróught lów my pride. 880

ATHENA

I will not weary of speaking thee fair words.
Ne'er shalt thou say that thou, an ancient Goddess,
By me, thy younger, and these mortal citizens
Wert thrust forth hence inhospitably scorned.
No, if divine Persuasion, the soothing charm
And magic of my tongue, be sacred to thee,
Then here abide : but if thou wouldst not stay,
Thou canst not justly afflict this city's folk
With wrath or hate, or do them any hurt.
For thou mayst claim thy portion in her soil 890
Rightfully, with all honourable worship.

LEADER

Athena, what is this home thou offerest me ?

ATHENA

One from all sorrow free. Accept it now.

LEADER

Say I accept : what privilege shall be mine ?

ATHENA

That without thee no household shall have increase.

LEADER

Canst thou endow me with such power as that ?

ATHENA

Aye, we will bless thy votaries with good fortune.

LEADER

And wilt thou give me warrant for all time ?

ATHENA

No need to promise what I would not do.

LEADER

I feel thy soothing charm : my wrath abates.

900

ATHENA

Abide then here, and thou shalt win thee friends.

LEADER

But what strains must I chant to bless your land ?

ATHENA

Such as prefigure victory without flaw :

Blessings from earth, and from the watery deep,

And from the sky : let every wind that blows

Pass in fair sun-lit breezes o'er the fields :

Let fruits of earth and cattle for our folk

Increase in streaming plenty never-tired :

And for the seed of men be safe deliverance.

Yet favour more the birth of righteous offspring :

910

For even as one who nurseth plants, I love

The sort that from the just hath taken graft.

Such is thy part : while I, in the renowned

Trials of war, will ne'er forego my claim

To glorify my town with public victory.

CHORUS

We accept. Here with Pallas let us dwell.

Str. I

Scorn we not her citadel

By almighty Zeus and Ares cherished

As the fortress of the Gods,

Crown of Hellas, guarding

The altars of her deities.

920

Now for her I make my prayer
With benignant auguries,
That every blessing fraught with life's felicity
From her soil should teem forth
'Neath the bright rays of the sun.

ATHENA

Love for my city and people hath urged me
Thus to invite to a home in our midst
These powerful, stern, implacable deities.
Theirs is the office to govern all things 930
That concern mankind.
But whoe'er meets with them in wrathful mood,
Knows not whence falls the stroke on his life :
For the sins of his ancestors hale him before
Their throne to be judged ; and silently Death,
Loud though his boasts be,
In cruel wrath smites and destroys him.

CHORUS

Evil breath néver blow to hurt her trees : Ant. 1
Such to Athens be my grace.
Never trespass hither scorching wind 940
To nip the budding eyes of plants.
May no blast of sterile
Blighting plague assail her fields.
And with double births let Pan
At the appointed season bless
The mothers of the thriving flock ; and may rich Earth
Teem with abundant offspring,
Gifts to thank the bounteous Gods.

ATHENA

Hear, O ye warders of Athens, what blessings
Her promise assures you : for great is the power 950
Of the holy Erînus both with immortal
And underworld spirits ; and among mankind
Visibly sovereign governors are they,

Bestowing on one man gladness and song,
And a life tear-dimmed on his neighbour.

CHORUS

Let not death's sudden stroke Str. 2
On her sons untimely fall.
To every young and lovely maid
Grant that a mate be assigned, O ye powers hymeneal,
And ye, O divine Fates, 961
Daughters of Night who bare us,
Deities truthful and just,
Partners in every household,
Powerful over all seasons,
Righteous visitants of man,
In áll lánds first in honour mid the Gods !

ATHENA

With a joyful heart I hear their assurance
Of kindness and zeal
To my land. And thankful am I to Persuasion, 970
That her eyes kept watch over my lips,
When in such savage wrath they rejected our plea.
But might was with Zeus who is patron of wise speech.
Though victory is mine,
'Tis in blessing alone we are rivals.

CHORUS

Let not fierce Faction's moan, Ant. 2
Hungering after evil deeds,
In this city e'er be heard.
Nór may the dust that has drunk the red blood of the
townsmen 980
In wrath grow vengeful,
Lusting for fresh bloodshed,
Payment for citizens slain.
Rather in loving-kindness
May they rejoice one another,
And with one soul let them hate.
In súch wise many human ills are cured.

ATHENA

Hear with what wise speech into the pathway
Of blessing they enter.

Stern and terrible though they appear, yet 990

Great gain shall they bring you, people of Athens.

If you repay them for kindness with kindness

And reverent worship, this shall your fame be,

To guide both your land

And city in the straight path of justice.

CHORUS

Str. 3

Joy to you, joy in the wealth that is each man's portion !

Joy be to this city's folk !

Lovers are you, and beloved,

Of the Virgin throned by Zeus.

Timely wisdom now is yours,

1000

Sheltered under Pallas' wings,

Sacred in the Father's eyes.

ATHENA

Joy to you also ! But before you I go ;

For now will I show you your cavern shrines

By the sacred light of these your conductors.

With solemn sacrifice now let us speed you

To your homes in the earth. What will hurt this city,

Imprison it there ; but whate'er bringeth gain,

Send forth to increase her with glory.

Lead now these newcomers on their way,

1010

You my citizens, children of Kranaos :

And still in your hearts

For a kind deed let there be kind thoughts.

CHORUS

Joy to you, joy yet again with a double blessing, Ant. 3

All ye dwellers in this land

Deities and mortal men !

While in Pallas' town ye live,

And our rights as denizens

Reverence still, you shall not find
In your life's lot aught unkind.

1020

ATHENA

Your prayers of benediction I commend,
And by bright-gleaming torch-light will conduct you
Unto your nether subterraneous homes,
Escorted by these ministrants, who guard
My image, (and with right ; for 'tis the eye
Of Theseus' land) a fair-famed company
Of maidens and of wives and agèd dames.
Drape now our guests in honourable robes
Of crimson. Let the lights move on before.
Erelong shall these new residents show their love
By prospering the manhood of our land.

1030

CHORUS OF THE ESCORT

Pass on your way in the pride of your worship,
Night's dread Children, with glad-hearted escort.
(Silence, friends, for our sacred song !)

Str. 1

There within Earth's immemorial caverns
Ritual worship and offerings await you.
(Silence all for our sacred song !)

Ant. 2

Kind and loyal of heart to our land,
Come, ye revered ones, pleased with the festive
Flame-devoured torch, as you pass to your home.
(Cry aloud a refrain to our chorus !)

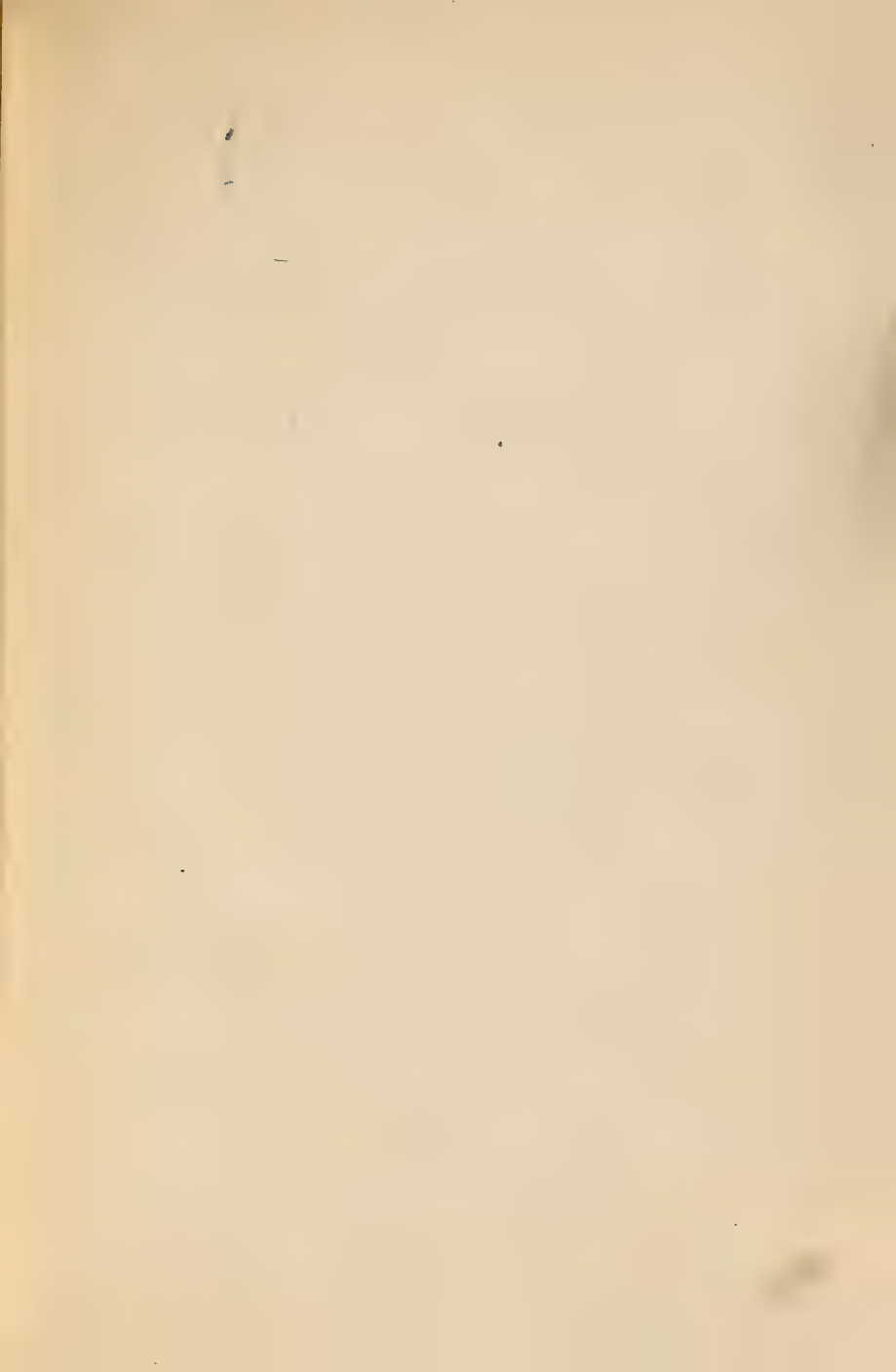
Str. 2

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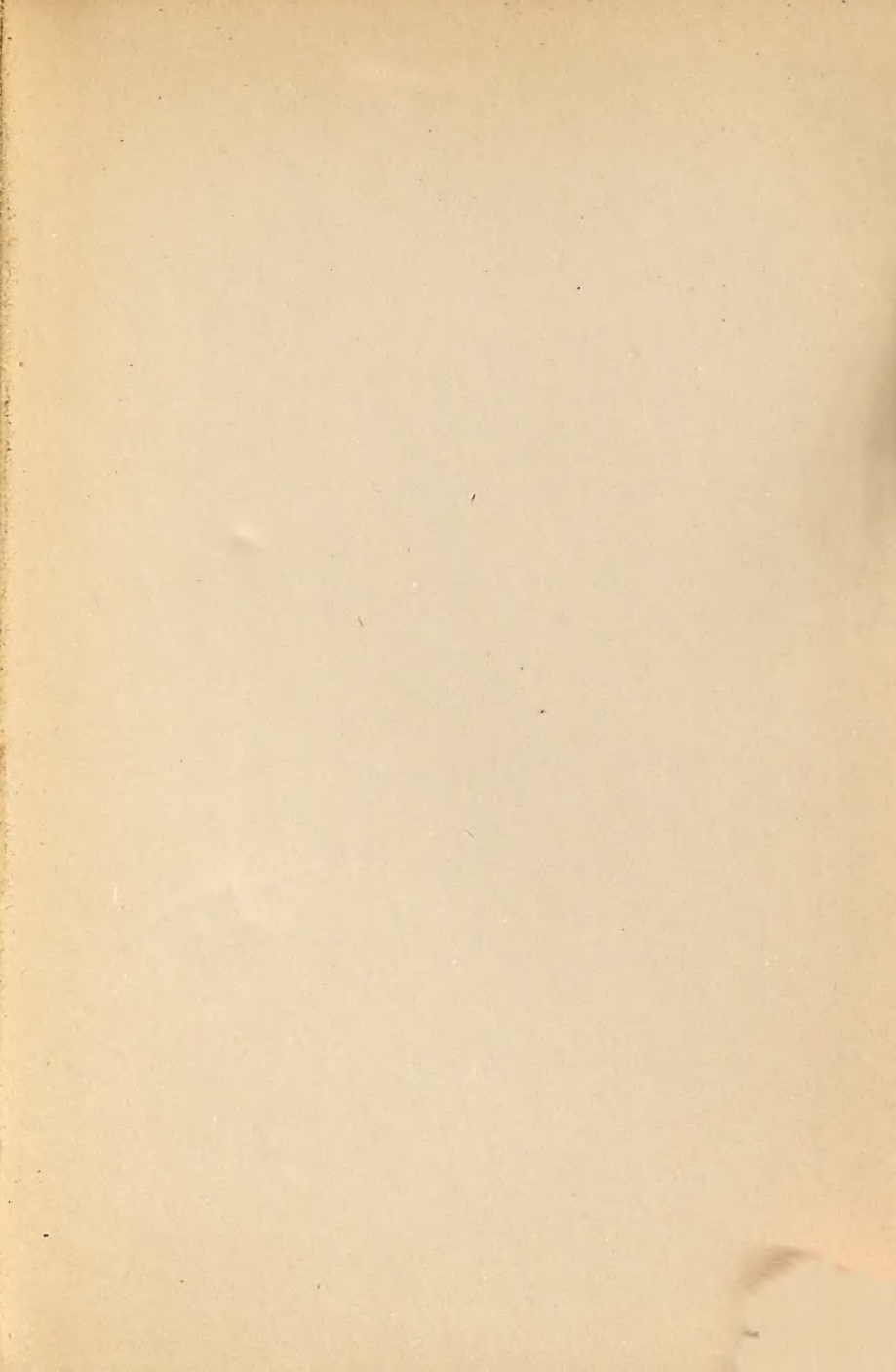
Let Peace follow with flaring of torches.
Burghers of Pallas, unto this ending
Zeus the all-seeing and Fate have conspired.
(Cry aloud a refrain to our chorus !)

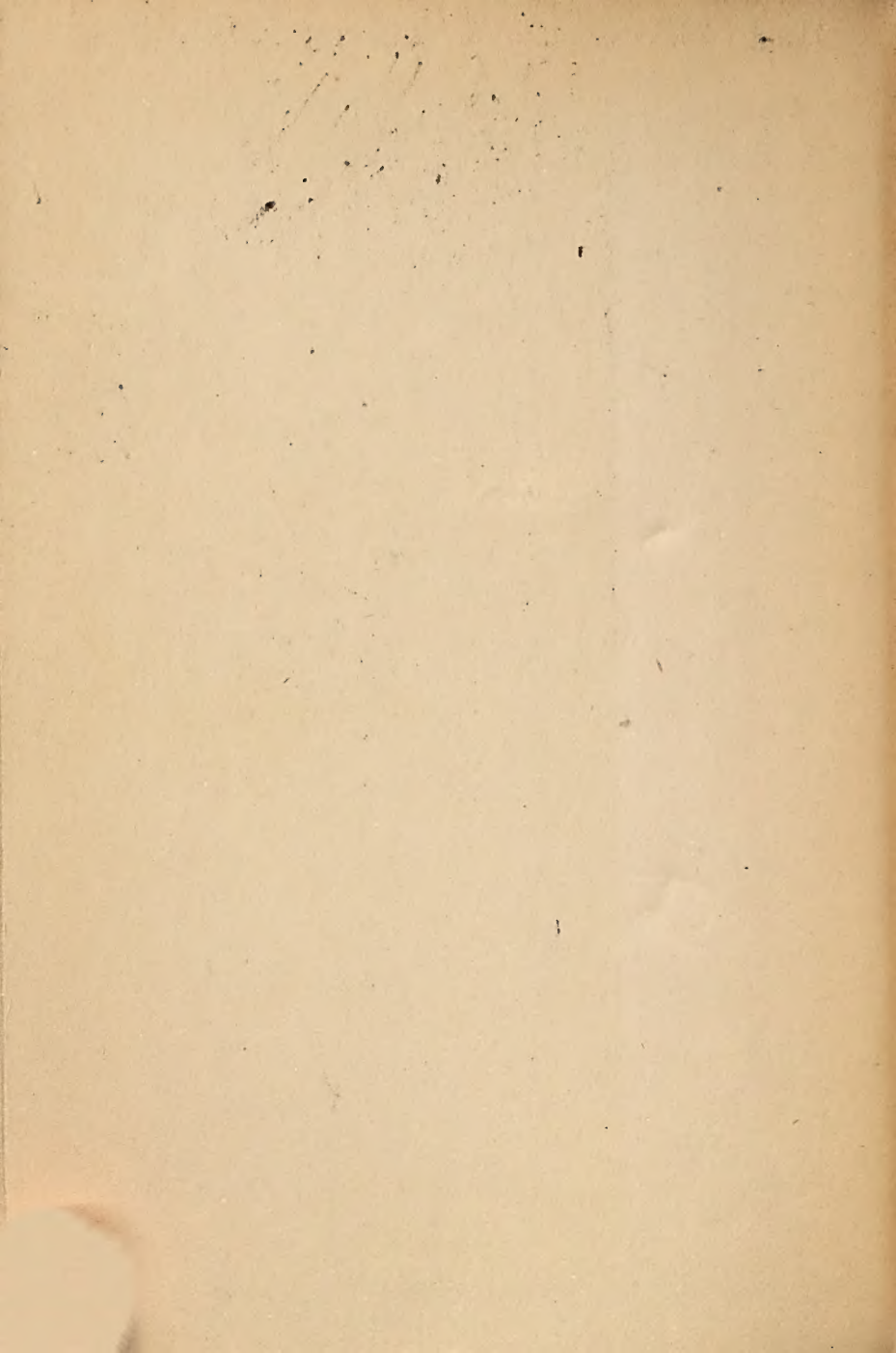
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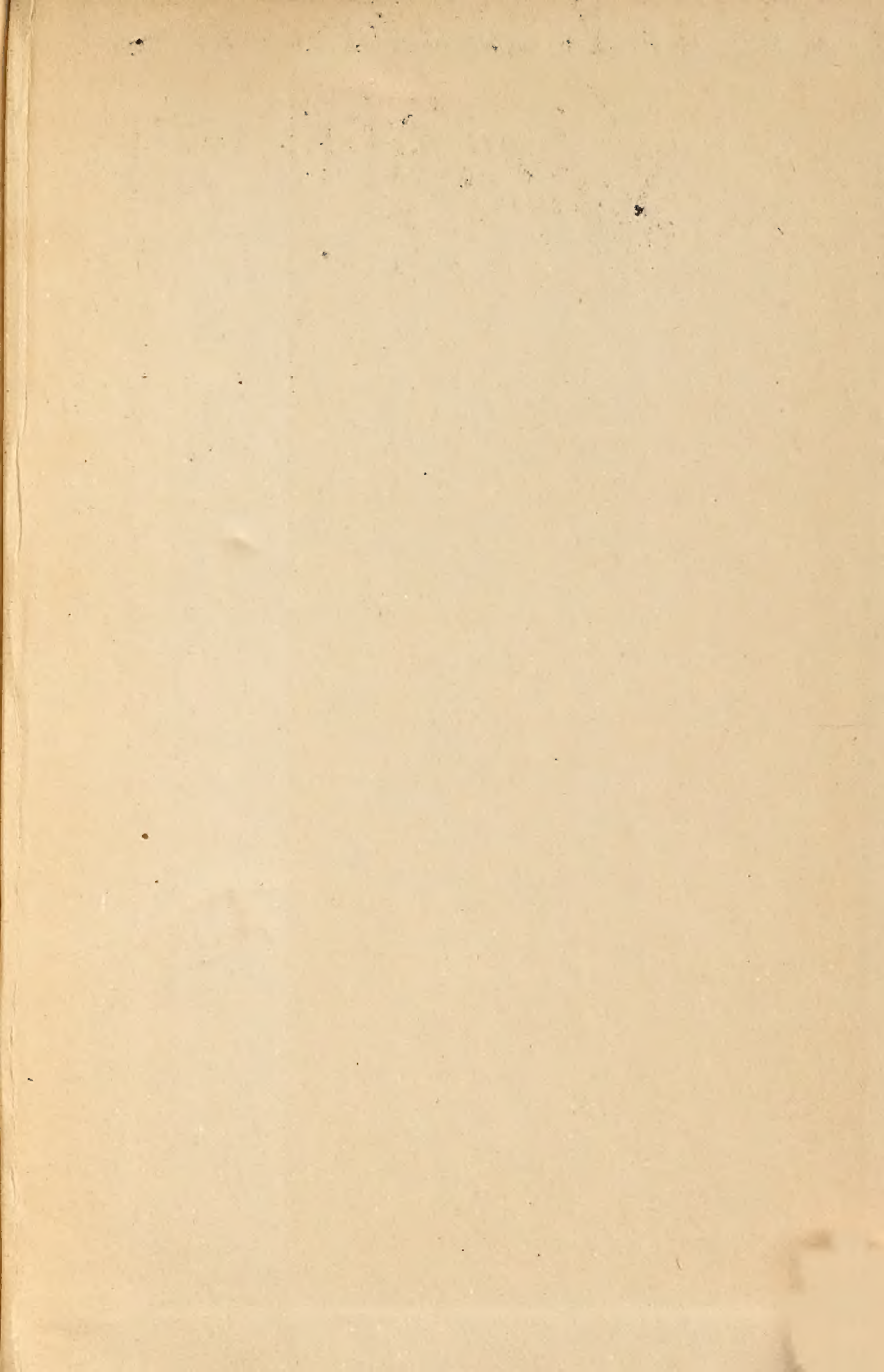
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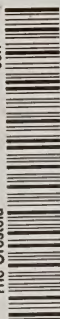




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